Commonweal

Jeremiah Baruch
HITTING BETWEEN
THE BELTS

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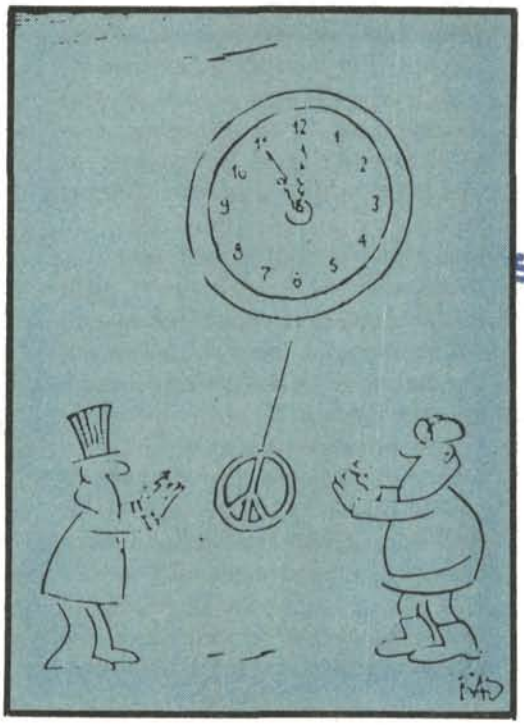

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Can we defend Europe & the Gulf with conventional arms?

Barry R. Posen & Stephen W. Van Evera

The Editors: THE DAY AFTER THE EUROMISSILES
John Garvey: GEARING UP FOR WAR
John Spragens: VIETNAM, THE BATTLE REJOINED

ALSO: J.S. Fuerst, (sterbeck, Jr.
Desmond O'Grady, Hirschfield

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Correspondence

Liberal imperative

Commerce, Tex.

To the Editors: David Carlin's soul-searching over the Democratic party's pro-abortion stance (Nov. 18) discounts some compelling positive factors. Recent medical advances and many studies published in the past decade reemphasize the humanity of the unborn and their right to protection. National polls consistently show that three Americans out of four oppose abortion-on-demand.

It is deplorable that we have allowed the problem to be obscured in a semantic jungle. The defense of the weakest element of the human family is a quintessentially liberal imperative. Liberals cannot shy away from the issue because illiberal extremists seem to have preempted it. By the same token, how can anyone with a sincere concern for the rights of all other human beings consider pro-abortionists "liberal," however "reasonable and well-intentioned" they may appear to be on other matters?

Candidates must be challenged on the biological and political aspects of the question. The "other-people's-morals" excuse must be exposed as a cop-out.

How to start? Why not with support for the two candidates whose minds still seem open: Reubin Askew and Jesse Jackson?

EDWARD M. CORBETT

No government funds

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: The moral concerns of anti-abortion Democats is portrayed acutely by David Carlin ("The Dilemma of an Anti-Abortion Democrat," Nov. 18) but his solutions seem flat. He proposes a caucus within the party or a special interest group on its edge to seek redirection of the party's position.

The real dilemma of Democrats like Carlin is to find a stance which both conveys their moral indignation and offers the party a reasonable policy alternative. Why not the goal of ending all government support of abortion? We may not be able to ban all or most abortions; but we could work for the more modest, pragmatic goal of ending government financing of them.

Most abortions constitute birth control after the fact of intercourse without the circumstances of rape, incest or threats to the mother's health. This means that abortion is, in fact, usually not a matter of health care but rather exercise of one's putative rights to control one's body. These rights are not required, in their exercise, to be financed by government.

By leaving the field of battle over the impossible task of convincing the country that abortion *per se* is wrong, we can concentrate on the realistic task of ending the clear misuse of federal, state, and local funds intended for health programs. Democrats (and Republicans as well) should be able to agree that birth control, and abortion, are life-style choices and thus outside the field of government control *and* funding.

If the pro-abortion wing of the Democratic party wants to help the poor, or others, finance their birth control, let them set up private foundations or other extra-governmental programs. Only then will it be possible for Democrats to bypass the abortion obstacle which now prevents a unified, and successful, party.

CLIFFORD P. HACKETT

A complex division

Newton Upper Falls, Mass.

To the Editors: Having been in Ireland for the month prior to the abortion referendum, I found Peadar Kirby's report [Oct. 7] quite misleading.

One would imagine the Catholic hierarchy had issued a statement of uncompromising rigor: in fact their joint statement was a measured response to a matter of public debate and readily recognized the right of honest dissent.

To characterize the pro-amendment side as "representing a conservative and triumphalist Catholicism" is quite unfair to the complex division which the issue evoked. The purpose of the amendment was preemptive, largely due to:

(1) the increasingly vocal minority in the Women's Right to Choose lobby;

(2) the example of Great Britain where abortion legislation was passed the face of opposition from 60 percent the electorate; and

(3) the rumblings in the European P liament which resolved to force aborti upon member states by "bringing pre sure through Community instrument on reluctant countries. [Debate on th Resolution on the Position of Women the European Community: 10-11 Feb ruary, 1981].

Nor did the issue divide on narrowl sectarian lines. In a statement issued o the eve of the referendum, a group Northern Irish clergymen, drawn fro all Protestant denominations, remarked "We are disturbed by the continual ac cusations made against the amendment implying that it would be a sectarian addition to the Constitution. This is an entirely false view of the amendment. Pluralism at the expense of justice is no worth having."

Pace Peadar Kirby, "many leading figures in Irish life" were active on ***both sides, and each had its embarrasing*** quota of lunatic fringe participants.

Underlying the whole article was the impression that here once again was the Catholic church invading the domain of politics, and yet he is pleased to see it do so in Latin America (where he is prepared to *imprimatur* the cause). Surely the ultimate irony is that the "liberal" wing of the Irish media is only prepared to cry "enough" when the issue is one of *sexual* morality. What a pity the hierarchy's far more trenchant utterance on

(Continued on page 26)

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commonweal

THE DAY AFTER THE EUROMISSILES

IT IS high time to start putting the pieces back together. The U.S. and NATO have proved they meant what they said about starting deployment of Euromissiles. Moscow has proved it meant what it said about breaking off negotiations and retaliating with its own accelerated deployments. No one is better off. The world is not exactly on the brink of nuclear Armageddon. But we're just that much closer, and we've lost just that much more time to do anything about it.

If there is any difficulty in affixing blame for this sorry state of affairs, it is only because there are so many worthy candidates. A justifiable concern for our own government's role ought not to lead us to minimize the Soviets' responsibility. By replacing older weapons with SS-20s, the Kremlin upped the ante in the late seventies and has stubbornly stuck to its own form of "zero option" ever since, insisting that the West was not justified in countering the SS-20s with as much as a single new missile. The SS-20s may have been partly the unthinking product of the USSR's own version of the military-industrial complex, but they also fit nicely into longstanding Soviet efforts to undermine NATO. In this they have succeeded marvelously — but only with the help of extraordinary bungling on the part of Western strategists and politicians. At least with hindsight, we can easily recognize that matching the SS-20s with 572 cruise and Pershing II missiles was one of the more counter-productive schemes ever to spring from the brows of military planners. Virtually every knowledgeable commentator admits that these missiles are of slight military value; their real purpose is political — to represent the link between European and U.S. defensive systems and to assure the cohesiveness of the Western alliance. Such a political purpose is of course no less "real" than a directly military one. Indeed, the manifest ability of the West to resist any Soviet attack — and therefore to deter one from even taking place — rests far more critically on NATO's capacity for swift and unified action in a crisis than on any set of weapons. But it is precisely the cohesiveness of the Western alliance that the Euromissiles have come to threaten; it is the divergence, rather than the unity, between European and U.S. concerns that the missiles have come to represent.

The current disarray in the Western alliance is one of those remarkable cases of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Never had Soviet stock sunk so low in Europe as it did in the seventies. The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Kremlin's rejection of Eurocommunism, the lesson of the boat people and Cambodia, the attention redirected to the Gulag by Solzhenitsyn, on the one hand, and by the suppression of Soviet dissidents by Andropov's KGB, on the other, and finally the invasion of Afghanistan served to explode whatever lingering hold the Communist myth retained on the imagination of some Western intellectuals. At the same time, Socialist parties, most of them fiercely anti-Communist, achieved leadership on the left even in countries where the Communists were deeply entrenched.

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It took more than the Euromissiles, however, for the United States to blow its political and ideological advantage. There was Carter administration confusion, on the neutron warhead for example. There was the Reagan administration's confrontational stance toward Moscow, its loose talk about nuclear war, its dismissive attitude toward negotiations, its unhesitating alignment with repressive, "authoritarian" regimes. In Central America, Washington mirrored Moscow's claim to exercise veto power over the form of governments within its sphere of influence, and an emerging generation of European political actors was vividly reminded of their youthful opposition to America's war in Southeast Asia. (Why do Washington strategists typically hypothesize long-term risks to "credibility" if the U.S. shies away from overseas intervention while long-term costs in terms of anti-American sentiment, ranging from distrust to outright hostility, are seldom thrown into the calculus?) Then there was the pipeline controversy, European unhappiness over American economic policies, Grenada. . . .

As the lead article in this issue argues, NATO's military situation is far better than often publicly portrayed, enough so, in fact, that the movement away from early reliance on nuclear weaponry is by no means the pipedream it has been made out to be. On the other hand, the political disarray of the West is also very real — and largely self-inflicted. It is very doubtful that a last-minute suspension of Euromissile deployment would have made things any better, and a good chance it might have made things worse. What might have been done prudently two years ago was no longer so easy two months ago. But that point is now moot. What is not moot is that alternatives do exist, other ways of reversing the fearful momentum of an impoverishing and destabilizing arms race.

The first step would be to signal to both allies and adversaries that, despite the belief that the integrity of NATO's decision-making process may have justified going ahead with some Euromissile deployment in the absence of a negotiated agreement, it does not require deployment of the full complement of 572 missiles, a number that never rested on any military necessity. Not only should we indicate willingness to deploy no more Pershing IIs, in particular — a weapon as destabilizing on our side as the SS-20s were on the Soviets' part — but we should propose to the West Germans that the already deployed Pershings could be withdrawn unilaterally, "cashed in" for the expenses involved in building a conventional deterrent to replace the "first-use" nuclear one. Furthermore, by combining the talks on European weapons and those on intercontinental weapons, or by devising some other formula, a way should be found to deal with Soviet concerns about French and British forces. Moscow's suggestion that these weapons be offset by SS-20s is unacceptable as long as it fails to recognize the different numbers of warheads involved as well as the different purposes of the French and British forces. But *some* consideration is owed the weight that the French and British weapons add to the Western side of the equation — especially when both nations are on the brink of enlarging their deterrents.

Of possibly even greater importance is to do an end run around the blocked missile negotiations, and open East-West talks on two other essential matters. The first is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a measure close to final agreement when the Reagan administration suspended negotiations. The second is a treaty banning anti-satellite weapons and other space-based weapons. The U.S. and USSR are at a point of equivalence in developing anti-satellite weaponry. They are about to be propelled into a dangerous, destabilizing arms race in space, one which it would be enormously difficult to block after a few more developments. The U.S. should respond to the Soviet draft proposal for banning space weapons offered last August — and agree to a mutual moratorium on testing anti-satellite weapons in space while negotiations proceed.

These steps should not be televised spectaculars but sober

From Commonweal twenty years ago: "According to the lingering nineteenth-century myths, unemployment and poverty are due to a lack of personal initiative or too big a tax bite from industry, which presumably could expand and hire more if government didn't cut so heavily into its earnings. The second myth overlooks the fact that industry's profits have been soaring — they are up 40 percent since mid-1961 — while unemployment remains a massive problem. The first myth ignores the fact that a modern economy produces its own dislocations, and often on a scale that cannot be linked to personal character deficits . . .

"The Horatio Alger vision of economic success awaiting any poor man with sufficient drive is comforting, but irrelevant. . . . Though private industry has made strides in training people for the needs of a high-powered economy, the training has benefited, almost totally, those already employed. The unemployed have had to sit by and watch the widening of the gap between what they are equipped to do and what industry demands of its workers."

—The Editors, "Attack on Poverty"
January 10, 1964

STAFF OPENING

Commonweal will be seeking an addition to its editorial staff sometime in early spring. The position would involve writing, editing, working with authors, and numerous routine production tasks, much of this done under pressure and in a stimulating but spartan environment. There is some flexibility in regard to the starting date.

Applicants should be Roman Catholic lay women or men with wide cultural and political interests and knowledge. A demonstrated talent for lively, incisive writing is essential; some editorial experience is preferred. Four-day work week but modest salary. Applications by mail only. Applicants should include full curriculum vitae or resumé, writing samples, and a letter describing themselves and their interest in *Commonweal*. All applications will be considered confidential and given careful attention.

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diplomatic initiatives. On the Soviet side, the suspicion is so deep that any American move may be perceived as nothing but propaganda — and who knows what progress can be made in view of Andropov's illness? On the American side, there is not only distrust of the Russians but of the negotiating process itself. Still, the White House may be learning — witness the president's admission in *Time* that he would not now repeat his "focus of evil" remark about the Kremlin. In any case, there is no reason to resign ourselves to the current stand-off. Reducing the risks of nuclear war is not easy, but the effort should be relentless.

Protest in Chile

A PUBLIC BURNING

DESPAIR & REDEMPTION

ON A DAY last November in Concepcion, Chile, Sebastian Acevedo, a fifty-year-old worker, burned himself alive to protest the political disappearances of his son and daughter. Acevedo's immolation, the first protest of its kind against the fiendish phenomenon of disappearances that plagues Latin America, immediately brought to mind the immolations of Buddhists in Vietnam two decades ago. But since the U.S. is not fighting a war in Chile there were no network cameramen to record the event for American TV. For all intents and purposes it has yet to reach here. Suffering has always traveled slowly from south to north along the gloomy spine of the Andes.

In these days of mass rallies in Chile, with the beating of empty pots and pans to symbolize the hunger of the poor and with the confident singing of "Y va a caer! Y va a caer!" (He will fall! He will fall! Pinochet will fall), Acevedo's lonely act of self-extinction in Concepcion is all the more compelling. "To torture a person," said Chilean author Ariel Dorfman, "to cause a person to disappear, are the worst things you can do to someone." And, by extension, to someone's family. Clearly, the optimism of the mass rally ran counter to Acevedo's grief, was unable to cradle its lacerating vastness, or make him less alienated in a society whose rulers can snatch children from parents as though they were wrist watches.

In Chile, as in Argentina of the generals and in Stalinist Russia, political disappearances epitomize state terror at its worst. In an instant, a person becomes a non-person, a cipher to be either destroyed or detained as his captors see fit, stripped of human identity and of recourse to human rights. For the families, there is the dread of unknowing, the torture chamber of imagining, the rage of confronting the sadistic shrugs of bureaucratic denial. The families, tainted by association, find themselves entrapped in the implacable machinery of retribution. Official silence can be a torture almost as terrible as the rack.

The mothers who gathered in Buenos Aires's Plaza de Mayo resisted the authorities by returning week after week to the threshhold of power, refusing to disappear until they learned the fate of their sons and daughters. Acevedo resisted by disappearing in flames on his own terms, the autonomy of his agony a stark commentary on a government that has inflicted so much pain on the innocent as well as the guilty.

In the Bible, when God appeared before Moses in a burning bush that fire could not consume, he seemed to be saying that Israel, though destined to be burned throughout history, would never be consumed by history. Acevedo's act, while despairing and self-consuming, also brought a redemptive message inscribed in the flames: Pinochet may ravage the body of Chile, but its freedom-loving spirit will never be consumed.

Just before immolating himself, the worker cried out, "I want the CNI (Central Nacional de Informaciones) to return my children! I want the CNI to return my children! God forgive them and also forgive me for this sacrifice!" Immediately following his immolation, Maria Candelaria, his daughter, was set free and spoke to her father by phone as he lay dying in a Concepcion hospital. He asked her forgiveness and explained that he did what he did for the sake of parents everywhere whose children were being detained. He then told her to take care of herself, raise her son well, and help out around the house.

Acevedo was given a church burial, and the spot in front of the cathedral where he immolated himself became a kind of shrine to which people came to place flowers, pray, pay homage. A wooden cross was raised up outside the cathedral. And the church itself in Concepcion called for the dissolution of the CNI, Pinochet's secret police.

Ominously, the cross that was raised up in commemoration of Acevedo was later cut down by three masked men claiming to be members of the Comando Antimarxista de la Muerte (the Anti-Marxist Death Squad). But in today's Chile, to cut down one cross is to raise up another.

ROBERT HIRSCHFIELD

(Robert Hirschfield has published both articles and poetry in Commonweal.*)*

Washington report

'COMPUTER POLITICS'

WARS BETWEEN THE BELTS

THE STAMINA of the hardiest of flora and fauna is tested in Washington in December. One day it's sunny with picnics on the Capitol grounds and frisbees on the Mall, the next morning one is scraping off frost and bundled against a wind that singes the remaining roses to a crisp — only to find, two days later, that the temperature has bounced up again to the high 60s.

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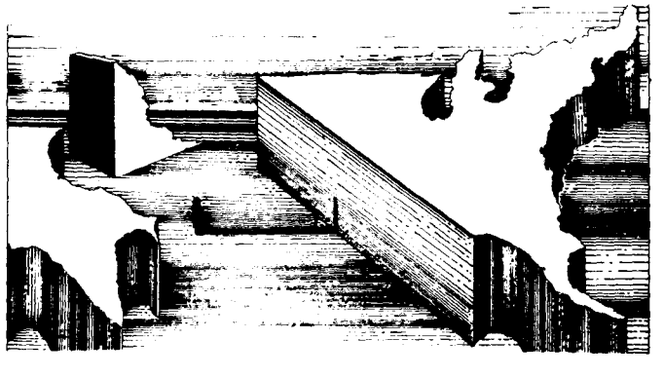
The founding fathers had the prescience to situate the country's capital at the very end of the frostbelt and just before the beginning of the sunbelt, so that the regional rivalries which beset the fledgling nation would continue to find their sharpest edge in Washington.

Those rivalries were acutely evident in a joint study released in December by the National Governors' Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures. A state-by-state analysis of virtually all federal grants-in-aid for state and local government revealed that assistance to New England increased less than 0.4 percent and to the Mid-Atlantic states less than 3 percent over the last three years. During the same period, federal aid to the Southwest grew 18 percent and to the Rocky Mountain states almost 24 percent.

The regional shifts derive from two causes — first, the formula changes in highway, mass transit, and job training programs; the significantly altered relative allocations of the 1983 emergency jobs bill; and the quicker payments in mineral leasing shared revenues. The second cause involves the effects on federal formulas of the population and income changes reflected in the 1980 census.

At an ever accelerating pace, there are an increasing number of political decisions based on formula allocations; and state governors and legislators, members of Congress, and the administration are fully aware that, depending upon the alternatives, some states "lose" and others "win." Federal aid to



states in fiscal 1984 will be $98.7 billion. While four percent higher than fiscal 1983 and eight percent higher than 1982, it is still $6.3 billion less than the fiscal 1981 federal grant level of $105 billion. When adjusted for inflation, fiscal 1984 aid is actually below that of 1982.

It is not only that the federal pie is getting smaller, it is that federal aid is seen as a pie at all — with each state and region aware of the limits to such aid and quite conscious of the slice given to each. The resulting competition has led some thoughtful members of Congress, such as Rep. Mo Udall of Arizona, to conclude, "There is an increasing feeling of antipathy beween regions of the country."

In addition to the decline in federal aid, according to the *National Journal*'s Neal Pierce and Jerry Hagstrom, the rise of the "new regionalism" results, in part, from "the development of stronger indigenous regional organizations" such as the Northeast Midwest Congressional Coalition and Institute, the Southern Growth Policies Board, and the Western Governors Policy Office. Backed by a battery of sophisticated analysts, each regional group is able to identify commonalities among their states and formulate strategies in their "interest." That Washington is increasingly becoming the battleground for these rivalries is indicated by the decision of the Southern Governors' Association to move its headquarters from Atlanta to Washington this year in order to be closer to the heat generated by the friction of the frostbelt states attempting to stave off further decline while the sunbelt states attempt to maintain their growth.

Sunbelt economists and politicians continue to note that the South's per capita income level is well below the national average while the Northeast's is well above that average. The frostbelt economists and politicians point out that if the cost of living differential is taken into account, the "real" adjusted per capita income level of the Northeast drops below the national average and that of the South and West rises above. They argue that unless real purchasing power is measured — by considering the geographic variations in cost of living — real economic need will not be identified. Moreover, the frostbelt advocates insist that state and local taxes as well as federal transfer payments be taken into account. The sunbelt counters that adjustments for state and local taxes in the cost of living differential reinforce the "overdeveloped" public sectors of the North, providing an indirect federal subsidy for what is viewed as the region's excessive level of state and local government services.

The result of these disputes has been characterized in *The Sun Belt/Snow Belt Controversy* by political scientist Robert Jay Dilger as "formulamanship" and "computer politics." By these terms he describes the potential manipulation of the formulas that have been used to allocate federal funds in grant programs according to an "objective" criterion of need — a criterion that can readily be seen to change according to the eyes of the beholder, depending on whether they are covered by sun glasses or a snowmask.

Dilger predicts that with Reagan administration efforts to replace categorical grants with formula-based block grants, "it is most probable that formulamanship will soon completely dominate the intergovernmental field." He observes a longer-term impact of this development is that outside sources, particularly regional groups, have the capacity to provide complex formula alternatives to members of Congress, who are then able to challenge the delicately balanced bargains struck in committee — if the alternative can be drawn to gain a winning coalition on the House or Senate floor. The traditional route of congressional decision-making is thus circumvented with the consequence that fewer members are willing to rely upon the expertise of congressional committees and the norm of specialization which, in turn, has implications for greater independence by junior members and more headaches for party leadership.

Of course, no matter what the formulation, regions are not readily bounded by a statistical set, without exceptions ham-

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pering coalition attempts. Florida often finds itself having more in common with the Northeast than with its immediate neighbors, and the needs of New England's high-tech growth do not always coincide with the survival instincts of the older Great Lakes industries (not to mention the strain placed on the Northeast-Midwest coalition by the acid rain controversy). Moreover, the variability within states, e.g. the unemployment levels within Texas, does not always allow unanimity within state delegations,much less within the regions. Nonetheless, regional coalitions continue to be formed in an increasing number of issue areas — education, housing, defense contracts, energy, urban programs, to name just a few.

The regional groups are causing more political decisions to be posed in a manner that accentuates conflict in an institution whose success is measured by the extent to which it contains and diminishes conflict. An institution that can ill-afford the strain, Congress is not unfamiliar with handling such rivalries. *Region* may be one of any number of ways to dissect an issue, but it can also open old wounds.

JEREMIAH BARUCH

(Jeremiah Baruch is the pseudonym of a Washington writer with a position in government.)

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

GEARING UP FOR WAR

G.I. JOE DOLLS HAVE RETURNED

I THINK we are gearing up for another war. Of course there are all the political signs: Lebanon is the scariest, a problem without a solution which the U.S. obtusely insists on solving. But there are other signs, and they worry me more. If Congress had any courage (hoping for that might be like looking for a backbone in a clam) it could put a stop to our further involvement there; if there were a genuine American desire that we avoid a deeper involvement in Lebanon even Republicans might do their best (as Goldwater has) to persuade the administration against the course it seems bent on taking. But there are mixed signals coming from the people these days, and something in the air which can't be picked up clearly yet by opinion polls, though opinion polls have already caught one major gust of it — the overwhelming approval of Reagan's invasion of Grenada. It was wonderful watching Tip O'Neill first deplore and then, with an eye to the polls, support the action.

Hawkishness over Grenada isn't what worries me as much as a series of other, more subtle signs. No one of them is significant; their constellation is. Not long ago *An Officer and a Gentleman* was a big hit. At one level it was a kind of *Rocky* with sex, a sentimental story of achievement. But it was also a remake of an old chestnut: the service takes a slob and whips him into shape, turning him from a selfish boor into a decent fellow.

An Officer and a Gentleman led to a couple of TV imitations, which join a series of enlistment commercials. The ads must be designed by the same people who turn out beer ads; they have the same relationship to the truth. Military life is about learning skills, preparing for your future, and travel; killing has nothing to do with it. (In the same way beer is about hunting, mountain climbing, and friendship, never about getting juiced.) G.I. Joe dolls have returned to department stores.

Journalism is playing its part. One man, who avoided service during the Vietnam war, half approves of his sons' hawkishness and wonders in print whether he might not have missed something. In *Esquire* Christopher Buckley, another non-server, also expresses some regret at having missed a necessary rite of passage, and Bob Greene has written a similar piece. In March the *New York Times* published a typically silly editorial — the usual *Times* process is to take an important moral or political question, mush it up, and offer an entirely predictable liberal answer. The editorialist quoted philosopher Jacob Needleman on the moral vacuum in our culture, a vacuum which has led young people to reach out for new religious ideals. There is in the young, he says, a "raw hunger for transcendence." A good beginning, with a quote from a good man. What does the *Times* propose as an answer? A serious study of religious values or the depths of mystical traditions? A look into the heart of that moral vacuum? No. First the editors reduce the question to the belief that youth are simply looking for a cause larger than themselves, and suggest universal government service . . . preferably mandatory, but (since that is prohibitively expensive) at least voluntary. The *Times* waves aside the objection that its preferred version could look like involuntary servitude. Don't we make education compulsory, they ask?

Later in the year the *Times* publishes the argument of Yale professor Donald Kagan, to whom it seems obvious that "in a world of independent and sovereign states that come into conflict and threaten one another's vital interests — sometimes even existence itself — citizens who choose to remain in a particular country are morally obliged to serve in its armed forces when the need arises." This doesn't apply to all countries, not (for example) to wicked ones, but only to "legitimate" states, and a legitimate state is "one that permits the open advocacy of different opinions, the possibility of changing the laws by peaceful means and, most important, emigration without penalty." He dismisses pacifism, even when pacifists accept alternative service, because pacifists can pursue their beliefs only in countries which are free and in which their fellow citizens are willing to fight for their rights. (A curious argument: you are free to be a pacifist because we let you be one; they wouldn't let you be one in Russia; therefore you shouldn't be a pacifist.)

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Now all of these things have been floating around in one form or another for years. There is nothing new about sentimental military movies, deceptive ads for the armed services, war toys, or arguments in favor of military and other involuntary state service. But there is more of it now, this distance from Vietnam, and it is happening in a particularly dangerous time. The people to whom the ads are directed and to whom the movies most appeal are too young to have any real memory of Vietnam. That may be just the sort of time a country needs to move from one war into another. That distance in time, coupled with what looks almost like nostalgia for military values, could make us ripe for another war if international circumstances and a hawkish administration moved us in that direction.

The examples above are only part of a swarm, but they are representative. And they fall into roughly two categories, with the *Times* editorial overlapping. The first category sees in military life an important personal and communal experience which teaches values, important ones, and in the absence of those values we are somehow less. The second category assumes that society and the state are one and the same, that duty to one is the same as duty to the other, because the state is society's representative. To have a duty to society, an obligation to the people who have come before us and have cared for us and those who will come after us, means to have a duty to the state.

More than one writer has pointed out that a heresy is not an outright lie so much as it is a distortion of a truth, and although I disagree with the people who now wish they had served in Vietnam and with those who believe in an obligation to serve the state, they are close to something true. It impresses me that those who now wish they had served in Vietnam, or at least wonder whether maybe they shouldn't have done so, are not (in any of the accounts I have seen) either resisters or conscientious objectors. They are people who, more or less for reasons of personal convenience, avoided military service. Although it may gall them to be compared in any way, one thing which those who went into the military, those who resisted to the point of going to prison, and those who were willing to do alternative service have in common is that all of them saw something greater than personal convenience at stake. Of course there were people who used conscientious objector status as a way to avoid a potentially dangerous situation; there are those within the service who have tried to avoid dangerous duty as well, and some who enter the service because it is the course of least resistance or for more perverse reasons: one of my classmates told me that his ambition was to be able to put a knife into someone and feel nothing. (He was a Marine.) For the majority of conscientious objectors, resisters, and draftees, however, personal

sacrifice for the sake of something which seemed more important was demanded, and given. It is easy to see how someone who spent a major portion of his adult life avoiding something which seemed to many of his contemporaries a duty could, with the passage of time, come to believe that an important part of adult experience had passed him by. But it is dangerously sentimental and short-sighted to conclude that one should therefore have participated in the war, without looking at the war itself. It remains a rather self-centered regret: I missed a great experience which made some of my contemporaries more interesting than I am. The problem is that this same regret could work for any war, or for either side in any war.

It is equally short-sighted to equate the whim of the state with the needs of society. We do have an obligation to society — but this does not necessarily imply any duty towards the state. The argument of Donald Kagan implies that there can be no higher allegiance than that demanded by the "legitimate state." For the Christian, however, there must be. That allegiance is to God, and to *any* other human being because of God's incarnation. This does not mean that Christians may never cooperate with the state, but that their cooperation is necessarily limited by a truth which matters more than the state which remains, however constituted, however just, a man-made thing. To offer the state the unlimited right to demand that we kill and be killed is, quite literally, idolatry.

I say that we are gearing up for another war, and I have never wanted to be proven wrong more than in saying this. I keep thinking of the memorial to those who were killed in Vietnam, which may be the only war memorial in history that comes close to telling the truth. It would come even closer to telling the whole truth if, along with the many thousands of American dead, there were the long list of equally dead Vietnamese. Conservatives frequently charge that this sort of argument implies that death is the greatest evil. It isn't my favorite thing, but in any case they miss the point. Killing is a greater evil than being killed, and it is done in the name of the state when it is done in war. This arrangement is becoming even more lethal than it was in the past, and must at least be questioned. To assume that we can do no better shows a suicidal lack of imagination. But this questioning is not only *not* going on (even the bishops' peace pastoral speaks of pacifism as a kind of personal spiritual hobby, a nice witness which states can't take seriously; the state as a source of war and not merely a bystander isn't really considered) — we even have a renewed nostalgia for the sound of the mortar shell. The times are right, simple people are in charge, and there is a generation of young men for whom Vietnam is as remote as the Spanish-American war. There is some hope in the growing uneasiness over Lebanon, but that uneasiness is taking place while a macabre Muzak plays faintly in the background.

JOHN GARVEY

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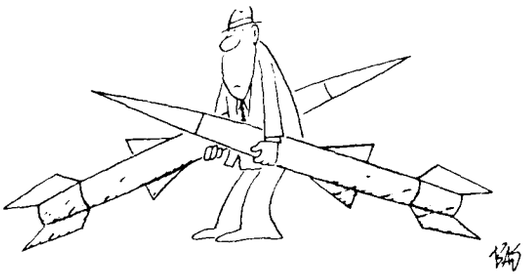
MOST OF THE POPULAR ASSUMPTIONS ARE UNREALISTIC



Can we defend Europe & the Gulf with conventional arms?

BARRY R. POSEN &
STEPHEN W. VAN EVERA

THE COMMON ASSUMPTION holds that Warsaw Pact conventional forces could quickly overrun Western Europe in a conventional war. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig warned in 1982 that the United States must "triple the size of its armed forces and put its economy on a war footing" before NATO could defend Europe successfully. The Committee on the Present Danger notes "a near consensus on the inadequacy of present NATO forces to defend Western Europe successfully with conventional arms."

Conventional wisdom also holds that American forces could not block a Soviet seizure of the Iranian oil fields, or even the Saudi Arabian oil fields, without using nuclear weapons. One columnist suggested that American forces "could never be a match for the Soviet juggernaut across the Iranian border." Defense Secretary Weinberger warned that American forces were "incapable of stopping an assault on Western oil supplies," while one prominent defense analyst proclaimed that Iran "may be inherently indefensible."

We question the conventional wisdom in regard both to Western Europe and to the Persian Gulf.

To begin with Europe, NATO conventional forces there are in fact substantially stronger than these gloomy views suggest, although they remain weaker than prudence requires. If Warsaw Pact forces perform a little better than best evidence suggests they will, or if NATO forces perform worse than expected, or if NATO leaders fail to mobilize NATO forces promptly after they receive warning of a Pact mobilization, then Pact forces *can* win the battle. But overall the odds favor NATO, if NATO leaders mobilize their forces quickly once they receive warning and if Pact forces demonstrate no surprising margin of strength over NATO forces. Although NATO forces could not crush Pact attackers decisively, they probably could deny the Soviets a quick victory and thereby turn the conflict into a long war of attrition.

In short, NATO forces cannot promise victory with the level of confidence that NATO leaders should demand, but they seem more likely to win than to lose. Moreover, NATO could be substantially strengthened without a major military buildup, if NATO forces are reformed along the lines outlined below. NATO forces are now close to speed, and could be brought up to speed, without a large spending increase, by improving NATO force structure and procurement practices.

A Warsaw Pact attack would be likely to fail because Pact forces probably lack the superiority in firepower and manpower they would need to overcome the natural advantage held by the defender, and to compensate for the obstacles that West German geography could pose to an aggressor. The Pact has only a slender manpower and material advantage in Central Europe — between 15 and 20 percent in total manpower, and 20 percent in total ground firepower (i.e., firepower in all NATO and Pact army formations available in Central Europe). Moreover, this firepower ratio may undercount NATO firepower because it omits some NATO weapons held as replacements for combat losses, leaves out some German reserve units, and ignores NATO's greater investment in divisional command, control, and intelligence hardware and staff, which increase the effectiveness of NATO firepower. If these factors were included, the Pact advantage might disappear.

Furthermore, the Pact trails NATO in tactical power. Total

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NATO tactical aircraft in Europe have triple the aggregate payload of Pact aircraft at distances of 100 miles, and seven times the payload of Pact aircraft at distances of 200 miles, according to the latest available data. This reflects the much greater carrying power of NATO aircraft. A NATO F-4 Phantom carries 16,000 pounds, while a Soviet MiG-27 carries only 6,600 pounds.

NATO planes should also be superior in air-to-air combat. NATO fighters are more sophisticated, NATO has better "battle-management" systems (the AWACS aircraft), and NATO pilots are better than Pact pilots. American pilots have more combat experience, they fly more hours, and their training is more realistic. Overall, Air Force Director of Plans General James Ahmann has testified, NATO fighter forces are "superior to the Warsaw Pact" and could achieve "very favorable aircraft exchange ratios" against Pact fighters.

These facts are overlooked because press accounts stress Pact advantages in unrepresentative subcategories, such as numbers of tanks or artillery or planes, where the Pact does have an advantage (150, 180, and 15 percent respectively). Such comparisons ignore NATO quality advantages (NATO planes, artillery, and anti-tank weapons and ordnance are better than those of the Pact) and categories in which NATO leads (major warships, helicopters). In general, NATO forces in Europe are not significantly outnumbered and may even hold the advantage in overall military capability.

The advantage of the defender also favors NATO. As a rule, attackers require substantial material superiority for success — between three- and two-to-one in the theater of war.* But the Pact probably cannot gain enough superiority unless NATO mobilizes late. In fact, NATO can maintain force ratios close to the pre-mobilization ratio if NATO mobilizes simultaneously with the Pact. If NATO waits several days and then mobilizes, the balance in favor of the Pact would briefly exceed one-and-one-half-to-one but still would not reach two-to-one in favor of the Pact. Then it would fall back to a level close to the pre-mobilization ratio. The odds clearly favor the Pact only if NATO delays mobilization more than a week after receiving warning.

GERMAN TERRAIN further complicates a Pact attack. German forests, mountains, and other obstacles limit the Pact to four possible attack routes: the North German plain, the Hof Corridor (toward Stuttgart), the Fulda Gap (toward Frankfurt), and the Göttingen Corridor (toward the Ruhr). Because the Pact attack is canalized by this geography, NATO can focus its defensive efforts, and Pact forces are compressed to the point where they cannot fight efficiently. NATO troops can "cross the T" — chew up forward Pact units serially — while other Pact units sit idly in the rear, since the Pact will not have room in the narrow channels to bring all its units forward at once. Moreover, three of these channels run the width of Germany, so attacking Soviet forces cannot spread out even if they break through NATO front-line defenses. The war would not unfold like the German attack on France in 1940, when the Germans burst into open plains, ideal tank country, after crossing the Meuse. Instead, Pact forces would be confined by geography to a narrow area until they penetrated deep in Germany.

NATO suffers some unique weaknesses, but these are roughly counterbalanced by unique Pact handicaps. NATO's seven European armies have not standardized their weapons, so ammunition, spare parts, and communications gear are not fully interchangeable. As a result NATO armies cannot easily feed on one another's supplies, a limitation that undercuts their wartime flexibility. In contrast, the Soviets have imposed Soviet arms on all their Pact armies. But this advantage is offset by the fact that Pact forces are less reliable than NATO forces; in wartime the Soviets cannot be sure whether the Poles and Czechs will fight with them, sit the war out, or even fight against them. Some 45 percent of Pact standing ground forces in Europe are East European, a circumstance that greatly complicates Soviet planning.

Most published estimates of the European balance are admittedly more pessimistic than ours, but they fail to fully utilize available information. Key data required for a thorough assessment are missing from their analyses: aggregate firepower estimates for the forces on both sides, terrain factors, and estimates of troop movement and interdiction rates. Instead, their judgment of NATO's weakness is supported by unrepresentative statistics and by conclusions based on unduly pessimistic political and factual assumptions. An overwhelming Pact firepower advantage, for example, is suggested by focusing on subcategories of weapons in which the Pact has the lead. Sometimes the number of Soviet divisions promptly available is exaggerated. Other estimates overlook Soviet weaknesses, such as the unreliability of East European armies. Still others neglect the advantage of fighting on the defense. In short, pessimistic estimates are more common, but they are based on sketchier information and less comprehensive analysis.

A Soviet attack on the Persian Gulf oilfields would require an enormous transportation and logistics effort . . . By one estimate, almost all the trucks in the Soviet army . . . .

* These ratios represent a best estimate for average situations. There are, however, some historical cases of successful armored assaults by attackers who enjoyed less than a three-to-one force ratio. It is possible, though not likely, that the Pact could achieve local successes against some NATO forces with less than a three-to-one advantage at the point of attack. If so, NATO might find itself without enough ground forces. This possibility is one of the uncertainties against which the reforms suggested below are designed to buffer.

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PREDICTIONS about the Persian Gulf oilfields, like those pessimistic predictions concerning Europe, do not make full use of available information. In fact, American forces could probably halt the Soviets short of the oilfields, chiefly because a Soviet attack would require an enormous transportation and logistics effort, which probably lies beyond Soviet capabilities.

The United States stands a good chance in the Gulf because Soviet forces could not gain decisive material superiority in the battle area. Even though the Soviets are much nearer, the United States can probably bring as much firepower to bear in the Persian Gulf theater as can the Soviets.

Proximity would seem to give the Soviets the upper hand; but appearances are misleading, for three reasons. First, the United States has invested more money in mobility equipment (transport aircraft and amphibious assault ships, aircraft carriers, airmobile and seamobile forces), which partially offsets greater Soviet proximity.

Second, the Soviets have not tailored their military to invade the Persian Gulf, so their forces are not ready to attack on short notice. As a result NATO would gain valuable advance warning if the Soviets chose to invade. Before the Soviets attack, they must assemble and test a command and control apparatus in Transcaucasia, which would make telltale radio noises. They must amass tens of thousands of trucks in the Caucasus, to supply Soviet divisions advancing into Iran, because Soviet forces near Iran do not have enough trucks. Soviet army divisions are structured for war in Europe, with its many railroads. As a result, these divisions are designed to operate no farther than 100 miles from a railhead, so they normally include relatively few trucks. Soviet forces invading the Gulf would be fighting hundreds of miles from any functioning railroad, requiring an enormous additional complement of trucks to ferry supplies on Iranian roads. By one estimate all the trucks from more than 55 Soviet army divisions (one-third of the mobilized Soviet army) would be required to support a Soviet invasion force of seven divisions in Iran, assuming no trucks break down or are destroyed in fighting. By another estimate almost all the trucks in the Soviet army might be required. This armada could not be assembled quickly or discreetly.

These preparations would give NATO at least one month's warning. In the meantime, the United States could move substantial forces into the Gulf to greet Soviet attackers — perhaps 500 land- and sea-based tactical fighters, the 82nd Airborne Division, and two Marine brigades within two or three weeks. Later the United States could bring in much bigger forces by sea.

Third, although the Soviets are much closer to the Gulf oilfields than is the United States, each mile the Soviets must travel is much harder to traverse. Soviet invasion forces must move 850 miles overland to reach the Iranian oil fields in Khuzestan province in southwest Iran. If they attack from the Soviet Union, they must cross two formidable mountain ranges: those along the Iranian northern tier, and the Zagros Mountains, which separate Khuzestan from central Iran. If they attack from Afghanistan they must pass over the fierce, desolate Khorassan desert and the Zagros. Only a handful of roads cross the northern mountains, and only four roads and one railroad span the Zagros. In the mountains these roads cross bridges, run through tunnels, cling to the sides of countless gorges, and wind beneath overhanging cliffs. As a result Soviet supply arteries would be dotted with scores of choke points — places where the artery could be destroyed or blocked. The blockage could not be bypassed or easily repaired.

With all the geographical barriers, Soviet movements in Iran would be exceptionally vulnerable to delaying action by American airstrikes, commando raids, or attacks by Iranian guerrillas on the scores of choke points between Khuzestan and Russia. This distance is too great for the Soviets so American airpower could probably continue striking these choke points even if they were overrun by advancing Soviet forces. These air strikes could be flown from aircraft carriers, by land-based aircraft that could be moved to the Mideast after warning is received, or by B-52s based on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, on Guam in the Pacific, or even in the U.S. Iranian forces could also slow down Soviet forces and disrupt Soviet supply lines, especially if they organized in advance for guerrilla war.

By one estimate, American air strikes and helicopter infantry teams working in the Zagros Mountains could slow the Soviet advance toward Khuzestan by sixty days. If we assume the United States receives and uses thirty days of warning, then American forces have ninety days to prepare the defense of Khuzestan. In this time the United States can move enough ground forces to Khuzestan to equal the firepower of Soviet divisions coming through the Zagros. Moreover, the United States can probably bring more airpower to bear in Khuzestan than can the Soviets, giving the United States a net firepower advantage. If so, American forces have more than enough firepower to win.

SOME Westerners suggest that the Soviets might mount a surprise airborne attack on Iran, seizing key airfields and other facilities with airborne units and holding them until Soviet ground forces could follow up, instead of mounting a prepared ground assault. But such an airborne strike seems even more likely to fail than a ground assault, because the Soviets could not assemble the trucks their ground forces require without giving away the surprise which an "airborne grab" would require. As a result, any airborne divisions dropped into southern Iran would have to hold off American and Iranian counterattacks for weeks while the Soviets readied their ground invasion force in the southern Soviet Union. Moreover, these airborne units could not be easily resupplied by air in the meantime, because Soviet fighter aircraft probably lack the range to provide adequate air cover over southern Iran from bases in the Soviet Union or Afghanistan, and the Soviets probably could not quickly seize, secure, and prepare enough air bases in Iran suitable for modern fighter aircraft. As a result, the Soviets probably could not defend their transport

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aircraft over southern Iran against American fighters, leaving their airborne units stranded. In sum, a Soviet "airborne grab" against southern Iran seems even harder than a Soviet ground attack.

Lord Robert Salisbury once remarked, concerning British fears that Russia would sweep through Afghanistan into India: "A great deal of misapprehension arises from the popular use of maps on a small scale." Likewise, American fears that the Soviets could sweep through Iran spring from dismissal of geographic and military realities. Overall, as one analyst notes, "the invasion of Iran would be an exceedingly low confidence affair for the Soviets."

As with the European balance, pessimistic estimates of the Gulf conventional balances do not fully utilize available data, or they rest on dubious factual or political assumptions. Again, aggregate firepower estimates, geographic factors, movement tables, interdiction rates, and warning estimates are usually missing. Instead, misleading statistics are combined with unduly pessimistic political assumption: e.g., that the Gulf states refuse American help or cooperate with Soviet invaders, or that the United States loses simply because it lacks the will to fight, or that the American mission is to defend only northern Iran, which would be much harder than defending the southern oilfields, or that American leaders would simply fail to heed the warning they receive.

In short, public alarm about American capabilities to achieve basic missions seems exaggerated. Publicly available information is spotty, so estimates of our current capabilities must be tentative — partly because the government has not published much useful information about military balances. Nevertheless, the best evidence indicates that these missions are not beyond the capacity of current U.S.-NATO forces.

ALTHOUGH American capabilities are widely underestimated, American forces nevertheless suffer some real shortcomings. These weaknesses are best alleviated by reforming current forces rather than spending more across the board. Emphasis should fall on selective spending increases, aimed at solving defined problems, or on structural adjustments. In both Europe and the Persian Gulf, relatively inexpensive reforms can make current forces more capable.

With regard to American forces for Europe, five reforms should take priority. First, American weapons design practices need adjustment. The United States still "gold-plates" too much equipment: it passes over cheaper, simpler designs in favor of expensive, complex ones that are only marginally more capable. This happens because the military often demands state-of-the-art in the technology it buys — for instance, the world's first gas turbine engine to make the new M1 tank the fastest in the world. Frequently the military also demands that one weapon be capable of performing several missions; so the Navy's new F-18 fighter must be a superior air-to-air fighter *and* a superior ground attack aircraft. These requirements can drive costs up dramatically. Some analysts estimate that the last 5 percent of performance in American equipment often results in a 50 percent cost increase. This gold-plating leaves the United States without enough equipment in areas where quantity matters more than quality. Gold-plated equipment also makes the readiness problem worse, because its use and maintenance requires scarce, expensive, highly skilled manpower and greater quantities of more costly spare parts.

In both Europe and the Persian Gulf, relatively inexpensive reforms can make current forces more capable.

Unfortunately, the Reagan defense program moves in the direction of more, rather than fewer gold-plated systems — more fancy F-14 and F-15 aircraft, more elaborate SSN-688 "Los Angeles" class nuclear attack submarines, and more nuclear aircraft carrier task forces and their complex Aegis air defense cruisers. Overall, the administration is moving toward a force that is too complex.

Second, efforts now underway to improve overall combat readiness should be continued. Congress likes to fund glamorous new weapons systems but neglects maintenance for older systems. As a result, much American military equipment is not ready for action on short notice.

In the short run, Reagan programs will improve this situation by increasing fuel and ammunition stocks and improving training and maintenance. These efforts should continue. But in the long run, Reagan programs will make the readiness problem worse, since Reagan forces are so gold-plated they will be even harder to operate and maintain. One result of the Reagan buildup, in fact, may eventually be a new readiness crisis.

Third, more military equipment should be pre-positioned in Europe. Pre-positioning permits the United States to send reinforcements to Europe more quickly, since less equipment must be moved across the Atlantic. This strengthens the United States in Europe and the Persian Gulf because American airlift and sealift forces are freed for use in the Middle East. The same concept applies to fighter aircraft: the more basing facilities are built in Europe in peacetime, the less equipment must be moved in wartime.

Fourth, the United States should move faster to ready its civilian airlines to transport military equipment and supplies in wartime. Civilian wide-body passenger jets can be modified at modest cost to serve as military cargo planes in wartime. A cargo-convertible "CRAF" (civilian reserve air fleet) is much cheaper than buying a purpose-built military transport aircraft. The Reagan administration is trying to move forward with

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The administration's refusal to specify the strategy behind its buildup deprives Congress and the public of the tools they need to analyze defense policy.

CRAF modifications, but the airline industry has not been cooperative. At the same time, however, the administration plans an expensive new air transport, the C5N. Pressing ahead with CRAF is a better idea.

Finally, Washington should consider shifting more Army manpower from support to combat roles. The "teeth-to-tail" ratio still seems too low. An American combat division with all its support personnel includes roughly 48,000 troops. To deploy comparable numbers of weapons, the Israelis and West Europeans use only 30,000-35,000 soldiers and the Soviet Union only 22,000-25,000. The Soviets probably lack sufficient logistics and support, while we have too much.

ALLIED REFORMS and improvements would do even more to strengthen European defense than would American reforms. Four programs should take priority. First, trained West European military reserve manpower should be organized into reserve units, to fill the need for extra forces that can be held back from the front to cope with a possible Warsaw Pact armored breakthrough. Today many of these reserves are used inefficiently, as individual replacements for casualties in units already in action. Restructuring West European reserves should be at the top of the NATO agenda.

Second, the allies' war reserve stocks — ammunition, parts, and replacement equipment — are much lower than those maintained by the United States. They should be increased. Otherwise European forces will collapse early in the war, nullifying the purpose of American stocks. Third, West European ground forces should be armed more heavily. Latest figures indicate they have only half as many major weapons per thousand men as Soviet and American units. Fourth, NATO and Japan should pay their airlines to develop cargo-convertible CRAFs. This would increase the potential speed of American reinforcement in Europe and also free American military aircraft capabilities if a simultaneous crisis arose, for example, in the Persian Gulf.

Western capabilities in the Persian Gulf should also be tailored more specifically for Persian Gulf contingencies. The Marines and Army airborne and airmobile units should be better equipped for armored war, with light armored vehicles. More American equipment should be pre-positioned on ships, in Australia, or at the American Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean. The NATO allies and Japan should be better prepared to defend themselves, since this frees American military power for the Persian Gulf. American allies should also be prepared to move their own forces into the Gulf if the need arises. The defense of the Gulf is an allied problem: Washington should demand an allied effort. Finally, Washington should quietly discuss pre-positioning equipment in the Persian Gulf states. If Gulf governments do not want a visible American presence, pre-positioning could take the form of extra stocks and equipment for the Gulf states' armies, which Western forces could use in an emergency.

THE REAGAN administration deserves credit for its efforts to increase short-term military readiness, to rationalize procurement with multi-year contracts, to restructure American forces for Persian Gulf defense, and to improve strategic command, control, communications, and intelligence apparatus (C^3I). But the basic direction of Reagan's defense policy seems mistaken.

Insofar as the administration seems to have a grand strategy, it appears to incorporate requirements for fighting wars of every kind, all at once — global conventional war against an unspecified range of adversaries, offensive conventional operations against the Soviet homeland, and a victorious nuclear war against the Soviets.* Press accounts suggest that Reagan defense planners believe they cannot achieve this strategy without another enormous military buildup once the current one is completed. More important, the Reagan emphasis on counterforce, conventional offense, and intervention seems inconsistent with containment and raises the risk that a conventional conflict will escalate to a general thermonuclear war.

Finally, the administration deserves criticism for sowing the defense debate with confusion. Its refusal to specify the strategy that requires such a buildup deprives Congress and the public of the tools they need to analyze defense policy. As a result, the whole buildup proceeds with no clear definition of its purpose, no way to judge its necessity, no criteria to judge whether new forces are meeting real needs or leaving real needs unmet, and no logical stopping point. In addition, this administration has done even less than its predecessors to make basic defense information available to the public, and its publications have been even more misleading. The 1983 and 1984 Defense Department Annual Reports to the Congress omit basic data contained in previous annual reports and, instead, are filled with alarming charts that imply American weakness but do not clarify where weaknesses really lie.

Public confusion about the basic facts of defense — including an administration's basic goals and strategy — is a major American national security problem. Defense matters are not too complex for lay persons to understand. The mistakes made by the Reagan administration began with public confusion about facts of history, hardware, and strategy. Clearing up this confusion is the first step toward better defense policy.

*These points are examined in our longer analysis in *International Security* and *Eagle Defiant*.

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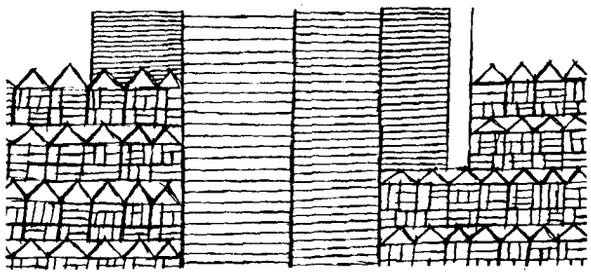
A HOUSING CONTROVERSY TWELVE YEARS LATER



Another part of the Forest Hills

J.S. FUERST

TWELVE YEARS AGO, New York City was almost torn apart by the fight of the middle-class, predominantly Jewish residents of Forest Hills, Queens, and the Lindsay administration. In attempting to respond to the needs of low- and moderate-income residents, the city had designated a public housing project for future construction in the Forest Hills area.

Actually the New York City Housing Authority, then chaired by Simeon Golar, had at the time one of the best records in the U.S. in making available low- and moderate-income housing in middle-class areas. Such projects as Pelham Bay and Parkside in the Bronx, Chelsea Elliott and Alfred E. Smith Houses in downtown Manhattan, and Pomonock in Queens were all highly integrated developments with black, white and Spanish-American, elderly and young, nuclear and broken families, self-supporting and welfare families. They had low turnover and considerable demand. This, it might be emphasized, was an altogether different picture from public housing in other cities where most such housing was placed in unacceptable areas and tenanted by the poorest of the poor. Even in New York a great deal of the housing has been tenanted by blacks, though far less than in other Northern cities. (In New York City welfare families represent 30-35 percent of public housing, compared with 70 percent in many other cities.)

Despite its relatively outstanding record, there are a number of developments in the city which are distinctively black and have more welfare families than the average. This has stimulated the belief by the population at large — both black and white working class — that project living is both "second-class" and "dangerous." For many years the Housing Authority has sought to dispel this notion, but the occasional violence or criminal activity that surface in the developments and eager media coverage have not permitted this. Moreover, an acceptable image has been hindered by class-action lawyers, notably the ACLU, who act on behalf of most of the applicants who are rejected as tenants or tenants who are being evicted for "anti-social" and disruptive behavior. The ACLU as well as Welfare Rights and Legal Aid societies maintain in typical Don Quixote form that they are defending the civil and constitutional rights of defenseless citizens, and that the Housing Authority is in fact the housing of last resort for the true poorest of the poor, a position that no enlightened housing administrator has taken for years. Simeon Golar has said repeatedly that the Housing Authority is not housing primarily for the poor but is designed to cover a broad spectrum of low- and moderate-income families. Similarly, the former Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, Andrew Mooney, pointed out that the Housing Authority cannot be the landlord of last resort and should not be thought of in that light. However, the national media, and the New York City public have not yet come to recognize this. In New York, with the most progressive and tolerant acceptance of public housing, the white population by no means flocks to public housing.

It was in this context that New York City introduced in 1972 an 820-unit project, 22-story development into Forest Hills. Even though all types of reassurances were made to the community by Authority Chairman Golar, and in spite of the successful developments to which he could point, pandemonium broke out in the New York Jewish community, notably Forest Hills. Community residents led by real estate man and B'nai B'rith leader Jerry Birbach claimed that Forest Hills was being "sold down the river" by a consortium of Simeon Golar, a black leader, Mayor Lindsay, and Richard Aurelio, the Italian Deputy Mayor. Birbach and his group alleged that in order to protect Corona, an all-Italian, lower-middle-income working-class area, from the incursion of public housing, Forest Hills, a primarily middle-to-upper-income Jewish area was being made the sacrificial lamb, and that a public housing development with extraordinary high cost-of-site development was being foisted on them. Further it was maintained that such a development would bring to Forest Hills a host of social problems: crime, deterioration, and overcrowding of schools, and a complete change of residents.

After a considerable brouhaha in which Jewish organizations from all over the city swarmed over Mayor Lindsay, and planning organizations besieged both the Housing Authority and the Mayor, Mayor Lindsay appointed as negotiator and mediator Mario Cuomo (a New York lawyer who had been instrumental in helping to solve another local neighborhood dispute, this one revolving around a high school in Corona). Assiduously Cuomo studied the problem for several months, consulted extensively with all parties to the dispute, and then

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suggested a compromise under which the development height and size would be reduced to 12 stories and 420 units, the number of elderly would be increased slightly, and the form of the organization changed to a cooperative. In fact, this was to be the first all public-housing low- and moderate-income cooperative in the U.S.

Most of the Forest Hills population were still violently opposed to the compromise and maintained that the only type of public housing that would be acceptable to them would be garden apartments for the elderly. A small group of Forest Hills neighbors supported this compromise, including some Jewish leaders, and a somewhat larger group of city leaders. Mayor Lindsay held firm, Chairman Golar agreed to the compromise, and the proposal went through the Board of Estimate, launching a number of middle-to-upper-income families on their way to more affluent parts of Long Island even before any construction began, and Mario Cuomo on his way to the New York governorship.

Forest Hills Cooperative Public Housing was built and occupied in 1972 by 428 families, of whom 18 percent were black, and about 40 percent were elderly. More significantly, 60 percent were families, accounting for 75 percent of the development population with about 400 children, about one child per unit. At the present time the average gross income is about $14,000 per year, and very few of the families receive welfare.

While this income is slightly higher than is characteristic of many other public housing developments, and there is a slightly lower number of children per family, it is by no means unique. At Smith Houses, at Pomonock, at Pelham Bay and at Chelsea Elliott, as well as many others, the income levels, particularly the state and city-financed developments, are well above the averages in the federal ones.

IN THE LIGHT of the current misconceptions of the potential for public housing, one of the most interesting aspects of the Forest Hills development is its size and height. Originally there was enormous anger at 22 stories and the 800 units. The 420-unit, 12-story building compromise was accomplished without legal obstacles. However, the only way the development could be scaled down from 22 stories to 12 was by a great increase in per-unit cost of development, putting it far beyond HUD cost limits. In order for the compromise to take effect the City of New York had to contribute $10 million in a grant which was done in the interest of good government, racial harmony, and good public housing. Was it worth it?

As indicated in a *New York Times* op-ed piece on September 24, 1983, today the community, including the former violent antagonists as well as the more sanguine neighbors, express the opinion that the development has in no way adversely affected the neighborhood. A walking tour through the nearby shopping strip on 108th Street indicated a thriving commercial center with few if any vacant stores. The owner of the local fish market, an Italian-American, who has had the store in his family for many years, affirmed that the project was a real benefit to the community. A drapery shop owner, a German delicatessen store owner, and a pharmacist all joined in similar praise for the development and its residents.

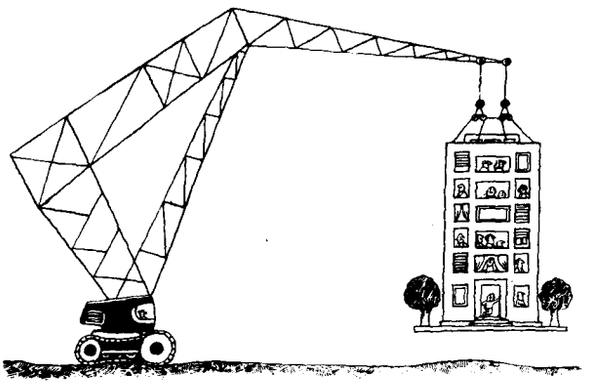
Although there have been changes in Forest Hills in the population, not the slightest unrest was attributed to the addition of these low- and moderate-income, multi-ethnic families. The only raised eyebrows were at the rather large incursion in the neighborhood of recent Russian-Jewish immigrants who live both in and around the development. If there were any uneasiness at the urban changes, they attributed it to Lefrak City, a private development on the other side of the highway from Forest Hills.

Similarly the residents I spoke to who lived immediately adjacent to the development did nothing but praise it. Questions were raised as to some of the young people who gathered in the community center, built by the development, but these complaints were primarily from residents of the development who resented the extensive use of the center, for which Forest Hills Coop was charged a big fee, by young people, many of whom came from Lefrak City and beyond. Even this, however, was recognized as the ordinary discomfort of an urban neighborhood rather than the problems associated traditionally with public housing.

Most significantly, real estate values, school reading scores, and crime in the area are all completely stable. Adolph Kahn, official of Lane and Company, the biggest realtor in the area, indicated that property values in Forest Hills have increased commensurately with those in other areas, and that building of residences as well as condominium conversions continue, all of which signify a healthy level of real estate activity.

Detective Jerry DiMuro, a long-time police officer in the area, told me that the crime increase predicted by the "doom and gloom" boys when the development was first mentioned, has in no way materialized; that in fact crime is no higher than before the development was built. From 1980 to 1983 there have been decreases in every kind of crime except auto theft.

Moreover, public school reading scores, according to Dr. Marcia Kroll, twenty-year principal of P.S. 120 in Forest HIlls, have remained stable at their high level. Today 73.9 percent of children are reading at or above grade level, one of the best records in the city. According to Dr. Kroll, although there have been some population changes in the area, and it is more multi-ethnic than before, the reading and math perform-



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ance in school is every bit as good as before, and the standards of the families are as upward-striving if not better.

Many of the erstwhile critics like Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt, a spiritual leader in the Queens Jewish community for many years, state that the primary reason for the success of the development was that it was "developed as a cooperative." Neither the residents nor the board itself would agree with Rabbi Grunblatt, since they both feel that the success of the Forest Hills Coop, whatever its virtues may be, do not lie in its "cooperative nature." In fact, at the board meeting I attended, the four members of the board, all top officials of the New York City Housing Authority, clearly demonstrated their control over most of the significant questions of policy that arose, while the resident board members, including the chairman, Gary McCormack, voiced their unhappiness at the lack of control of essential policies by owner-residents.

Resident board members were unhappy at the increases in carrying charges, at the burden of the community center which they believed served their needs only minimally, and the poor hot water delivery. On the other hand, it was clear by the give and take in the meeting that the management which was in the hands of the housing manager, a long-term housing authority employee, was more than satisfactory to the residents. Problems of hot water delivery and painting schedules seem to be more than equitably worked out under the joint guidance of the resident board members, the Housing Authority board members, and the housing manager. Altogether it seemed like an outstanding combination, although far more like a good tenant advisory board than a "Rochdale" or "conventional" cooperative.

Jerry Birbach, though he presently admits that the Forest Hills development is not only adequate but desirable in its present form, avers that the Housing Authority filled it with "the eyes of the world upon it," and sent its "very best qualified" applicants with far more restrictive screening techniques than it used for its other projects. Herb Hamburg, the Director of Tenant Selection, categorically denies this and points to the many other projects mentioned earlier as well as a host of others where the general nature of the tenants is the same as at Forest Hills with equally happy results.

Birbach and Hamburg, however, do agree on one point and that is that the class action lawyers and the civil liberty lawyers and welfare rights people in New York City (and elsewhere) seem to combine their forces on the Housing Authority to try to make them take and keep tenants with which no development, public or private, can survive. Within the last few years, the New York City Housing Authority has issued guidelines to its applicants pointing out that certain behavior patterns on the part of applicants may render the applicant ineligible. Actions such as confirmed drug addiction, history of recent, serious, grossly unsanitary housekeeping inadequacies, or a series of anti-social activities that seem to indicate an inability to live peacefully and meaningfully in a housing development can be reasons for rejection or eviction. The Housing Authority recognizes that the presence of too many of these characteristics in developments is an important factor in excluding projects from middle-income or working-class neighborhoods.

Mrs. James Kraus, a long-time resident of Forest Hills and an admitted original opponent of the project, explained it this way: "All we knew about public housing was what we had seen from elevated trains, or read in the news media. What this suggested to us was that if we accepted a public housing project we were in for trouble. Had we known that a project could be like what this one is, most of us would have accepted it without any fanfare. If housing authorities will control the type of tenancy, there is no reason that they cannot be placed in any neighborhood."

Stage

HOWE'S CHURCHES

PROMISES MORE THAN IT DELIVERS

TINA HOWE'S *Painting Churches* is one of those remarkably theatrical plays which manage to stir up doubts about both genre and contents even while it entertains. It begins in monologue as Fanny Church, a decayed Bostonian played with broad overstatement by Marian Seldes, divides her attention between the Lily Daché hat she has just bought for eight-five cents from a thrift shop and the family silver which she is packing for their departure from the home they can no longer afford. Her husband Gardner is a major American poet, friend of Frost and Pound, a winner of Pulitzer Prizes and presidential medals, and, although he seems saner than Fanny if somewhat preoccupied, he has become gaga, to use her word. Into their partially dismantled world of games and querulous affection comes their daughter, all bounce and would-be amiability, a vision in her Soho glad rags who may be a major American painter in the making. For much of the first act, *Painting Churches* (the title comes from the fact that Mags wishes to do a portrait of her parents while Tina Howe is doing one of all three Churches) has the look of a dotty-family comedy.

Howe has more serious work at hand, however — work that never quite gets done. The play is concerned with both the physical and mental indignities of growing old and the conventional parental-child conflict. Gardner, who can no longer write poetry, has turned to criticism, but has been unable to do anything except type out the work of the poets that he intends to discuss. His professional decay has its counterpart in the collapse of the once beautiful marriage of the Churches which exists now only in the parody that the two of them play out under the commanding direction of Fanny. Howe (and Seldes) wants to suggest that Fanny's icy inanity is a survival pose, her way of sustaining Gardner, jollying him toward the grave that she longs to share.

If Mags's memory is correct — the six months she was

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banished from table and the melted-crayon masterpiece she constructed during her exile in the bedroom — Fanny has always been something of a martinet and the Gardner-Fanny team one that worked with greater charm when there are no intruders, not even children. Mags's memory of swimming in the phosphorus-covered water with her father is an exclude-mother recollection which suggests that this has been as much a triangle as it has a family. Yet, the central tension among the three figures is that the parents — the famous poet and the flamboyant mama — have so intimidated the child that even now, welcomed by the New York art world, she wants their approval most of all. And she gets in an oddly lyric, slightly wacky final scene in which they dance their way into a Renoir painting after looking at the portrait she has done of them.

At the end of the first act, as Mags's babbled demand for recognition brings the broad comedy to a close, the show becomes darker. There are still many laughs — and Seldes goes for them in earnest — but both Fanny and Gardner get angry or pathetic scenes which indicate that growing old is not a joke and the rebellious, loving daughter has her confrontations. Interesting scenes though these are, they seem to grow out of the playwright's skill, not out of the characters. Where the play goes wrong, I think, is in the hilarious scene in which the parents discover how tasty soda crackers are and vie for the box with total concentration while the daughter is trying to tell them that she is about to have her first one-woman show at the Castelli Gallery. The scene is as delicious as the soda crackers, and I and everyone around me laughed noisily; yet I suspect that the scene should be as horrifying as it is funny and the seeds for the later harsher tone planted here.

One other difficulty with the play is that it seems to have lost a generation. It is difficult to see Mags as the daughter of Fanny and Gardner. Granddaughter would be more appropriate. If Gardner published his first book of poetry before Robert Frost's *North to Boston* came out, then the Churches — or he, at least — should be well into their eighties which would square with the lines about incontinence and gaga-ness. Although Mags is teaching at Pratt, she cannot be over thirty, as her description of herself as a young beginner seems to indicate; Elizabeth McGovern makes a little girl of her, but that is probably a psychological not a chronological choice. Biologically, the relation is possible, I suppose, but it strains belief. What's more, both the old Boston/Pound-Frost parental context and the art world that Mags inhabits begin to seem gratuitous. David Hockney is the only name Mags mentions which has a strong immediate reference; the others seem to have been chosen because they are recognizable. When Mags says that as a portrait painter she is "so far out she is in," not only is the line a cliché epigram, but it makes little sense in the current art world. I labor these points for two reasons. For one thing, Howe seems to want *Painting Churches* to deal with change in the social and artistic sense as well as in human terms. If her concern is only the latter, however, these disquieting specific references still intrude, as they would not if the movement from laughter to pathos were completely absorbing.

Painting Churches keeps promising more than it delivers. Still, it is worth seeing because Tina Howe is clearly a talented playwright with an attractively oblique way of seeing, her play is acted with vigor, and the early scenes are triumphantly funny. *(At the Lambs.)*

GERALD WEALES

Screen

MISSED LIST

CATCHING UP

FEAST OR FAMINE, usually the latter. Sometimes I go for months without feeling that there's a movie around really worth writing about. Then all of a sudden, though far more rarely, there are so many that I can't get to them all. As the end of the year approached, I realized that since last summer I had been falling further and further behind, that I would need twice as many columns as I had to cover everything I wanted to recommend. In this column and my next one, which will be my last for a while, I have therefore tried to play a little catch-up ball. This is not exactly my ten-best list, though there are films on it that would make such a list, if I were drawing one up this year. But what I'm offering here is

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more like a best-of-the-missed list, an anthology review of all the good movies around since the fall that I haven't had a chance to tell you about yet.

In *The Grey Fox*, the actor and the character he plays fit each other as snugly as a horse and a rider who've been together a long, long time. Each knows the other's instincts and moods. There are no missteps, no straining at the bit. The character is a train robber named Bill Miner who emerges from three decades in prison and goes right back to his old line of work. The actor is Richard Farnsworth, who has been a Hollywood stunt man since the 1930s. Farnsworth has seen the same side of the movie business that Miner has seen of the wild west. Both have been on the hard-scrabble fringes of a glamorous profession, out where the risks are greater and the living smaller. Farnsworth, who is sixty-eight, does all his own stunts in this movie. He's done them for others, like Gary Cooper, for as long as Miner has done time. This has made him into precisely the steely-eyed, soft-spoken man Miner needs to be.

The Honorary Counsel is what Graham Greene called the novel on which *Beyond the Limit* is based. Greene's title character is a British expatriate (Michael Caine) living in a South American town to which there moves a doctor (Richard Gere) who is mixed up with terrorists. What brings the two men together is that both love a young prostitute (Elpidia Carrillo). The counsel is a man who begins with no illusions and ends up with too many. He lives life backwards, and thereby survives while stronger men perish in a fiasco created by the terrorists. Having at first been a drunkard and a cynic, the counsel ultimately becomes a sentimental fool. When the world around him disintegrates, he escapes into a dream world where cuckolds and their wives live happily ever after. It's a story whose pessimism is curiously moving, almost poignant.

Under Fire contains similar material — an eternal triangle, this time made up of journalists (Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy and Nick Nolte), set against a background of Latin revolution, the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua when it was about to ovethrow Somoza in 1979.The movie is remarkable, though, because the revolution is *not* just background. The journalists go from their private lives out into the street fighting as readily as the Nicaraguans go about their daily routine amidst the shelling, the patrolling, the door-to-door searches, the rubble of their country. Something of the special chaos of such circumstances is conveyed. The love story and that of the reporters' coverage of the guerrillas run vaguely parallel. Neither ever becomes a mere metaphor for the other. Thus does the film avoid both the excessive cynicism of a movie like *Circle of Deceit* and the excessive romanticism of one like *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

In *Never Say Never Again*, James Bond enters a hotel with a woman and says, "Your room or mine?" A few minutes later, as they lie in bed, a tremendous explosion occurs in another wing of the building. He smiles, unruffled, and says, "it seems we made the right decision — choosing your room, I mean." Sean Connery was the one who swore "never again" when he made his last Bond film before Roger Moore took over the series. But by coming out of retirement to do this new movie, Connery shows he has Bond's own talent for the instinctively right decision. The only reaction even more characteristic of Bond than the *savoir-faire* just described is when he does allow a tiny hint of surprise to creep in. While a patient at a sanitarium, he is attacked by an assassin into whose eyes he throws a beaker of liquid from a laboratory table. It stops this incredible hulk dead. Amazed, Bond looks at the beaker's label, which reads, "urine sample — James Bond." Sometimes, even he can't believe his own strength. This slight incredulity at his own escapades is what makes Bond such a durable character.

In *Heat and Dust,* the film directed by James Ivory and adapted by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala from her own novel, heat is the fate of one main character, dust the fate of the other. Both are women — Anne (Julie Christie) who goes to India to learn about a scandal her great aunt caused there in the 1920s, and the aunt herself, Olivia (Greta Scacchi), whose story we learn as Anne pieces it together. Olivia chooses heat as her fate when she stays with her colonial-office husband during the summer months instead of going to the mountains. What really compels her to stay is the heat of passion she feels for the local Nawab (Shashi Kapoor) with whom she has an affair. The dust in Anne's life in India is not only that against which she chinks her room in the dry season, but the dust of the past in which she pokes, and that of her own nature. She too has an affair with an Indian, but in a mood of listlessness and acquiescence, not passion. Anne and Olivia play a strange duet across the years, their lives calling and answering in counterpoint. The music falls on our Western ears with unfamiliar beauty.

(The first of two parts)

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Larry Rubin

Lines to an Old Friend, Newly Widowed, Whose Husband Played Chopin

You have lost the pivot point
And roll around peripheries
In the slowing gyre—
You listen for a voice
Whose echoes have a tilted stitch
Like a record left out in the rain.
Pianos are unpliable;
You slam the keys
Amidst a din of ruined etudes;
Whatever notes he played
Hang suspended in the muffled air
Like the blanket pulled about your ears,
The mask that murders light, but not those muted arcs.

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Secular faith of Barbara Pym

ELEANOR B. WYMARD

MOST CRITICS of Barbara Pym call attention to the fact that after having written six successful novels between 1950 and 1961, her seventh, *An Unsuitable Attachment*, was rejected by publishers in 1963. Pym was rescued from oblivion only when Philip Larkin and David Cecil named her, in a 1975 anniversary issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, as the most underrated English novelist of the twentieth century. Before her death in 1980, Pym resumed her career with *Quartet in Autumn* (1977), *The Sweet Dove Died* (1978), and *A Few Green Leaves* (1980). But her ten novels, now available in England and the United States, are embraced, unfortunately, as well-crafted entertainments when, indeed, they share affinities with the existentialist mood of modern fiction.

At first, the world of Barbara Pym is strangely insular. The diminutive scale of English village life with the humdrum experiences of spinsters, rectors, and vicars' wives appears to camouflage any serious definition of the human condition. Pym's essential questions are further disguised by the tone of high comedy, for her characters are often ambivalent about learning the true meaning of their lives. In an early novel, *Jane and Prudence* (1953), Jane Cleveland, a vicar's wife, ruminates, for example, that "one's life followed a kind of pattern, with the same things cropping up again and again, but it seemed to [her], floundering among the books, that the question was not one that could be lightly dismissed now. 'No, thank you, I was just looking around,' was what one usually said. Just looking round the Anglican Church, from one extreme to the other, perhaps climbing higher and higher, peeping over the top to have a look at Rome on the other side, and then quickly drawing back."

Similar to Jane, Pym's characters consistently surprise themselves with questions from which they tentatively withdraw, as if to probe them would almost mean too much. Pym notes that Alaric Lydgate, one of the many anthropologists throughout her novels, "often avoided looking into peoples' eyes when he spoke to them, fearful of what he might see there, for life was very terrible whatever sort of front one might put on it."

But ultimately, the characters in the situational microcosm of Pym's country village neither escape nor endure their experience. Rather, they become more human by trying to live with it, affirming their lot in private ritualized gestures or formal ceremonies. Pym's essential subject is thus the incommunicable uniqueness of each ordinary person: "After all, life was like that . . . for most of us [life is] the small unpleasantness rather than the great tragedies, the little useless languages rather than the great renunciations and dramatic love affairs of history or fiction." From this perspective, stated by Catherine Oliphant in *Less Than Angels* (1955), Pym thus accentuates the commonplace, even the banal. While her characters do not confront irrevocable decisions, they do shape their lives through very personal choices. Moreover, they celebrate themselves in ceremonies which have private, sometimes communal, significance.

THE ACT OF WRITING is itself a ceremonial act for Pym. In *No Fond Return of Love* (1961), she acknowledged both the novelist and the sociologist for perceiving those moments which are "very near to the heart of reality." But Emma Howick, the social anthropologist in Pym's last novel, *A Few Green Leaves*, gradually forsakes accumulating data on the "Social Patterns of the West Oxfordshire Community" to write a novel using the same setting. According to Pym, the novelist who involves the emotions of readers in the rhythm of everyday living invites their participation in the very continuity of being. Since "we all came to the same thing in the end—dust and/or ashes, however you liked to think of it," it is the writer—neither the anthropologist nor the historian—who can preserve "a few green leaves" for future generations.

Tom Dagnall, the village vicar in *A Few Green Leaves*, is particularly aware of historic time. His goal is to discover the ruins of a deserted medieval village in the woods of Oxfordshire. On the first Sunday after Easter, he also rallies the villagers to participate in a walk in the park and the woods surrounding the ancient manor and mausoleum on the fringe of town, a variation on an annual rite dating from the seventeenth century. Preoccupied with local history, he keeps a record of his own daily life: "What was he to write about the events of the morning? 'My sister Daphne made a gooseling tart . . . ?' Could that possibly be of interest to readers of the next century?" Life, for Pym, is a social enterprise. Natural ceremonies must be preserved if one is to live fully in the present. Funerals, marriages, christenings "gave a kind of continuity to village life, like the seasons—the cutting and harvesting of the crops, then the new sowing and the springing up again." Such affirmation risks sentimentality, for it may seem that Pym is yearning for more simple times. Her sense of ritual, the most important organizing principle of her fiction, reveals, in fact, the evolving complexity of her work and brings us closer to its significance.

The early novels, *Some Tame Gazelle*

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(1950), *Excellent Women* (1952), and *Jane and Prudence* (1953), are grounded in unquestioned values. Jane Cleveland, now forty-one and a former English tutor at Oxford, had once "taken great pleasure in imagining herself as a clergyman's wife . . . but she has been quickly disillusioned." Nonetheless, she grows in personal identity to the point of being able to confide in her husband: "We can only go blundering along in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us . . . I was going to be such a splendid clergyman's wife when I married you, but somehow it hasn't turned out like *The Daisy Chain* or *The Lost Chronicles of Barset*." But by continuing to carry out the ritual duties expected of her role, she restores herself: "'I wanted some little books suitable for confirmation candidates,' said Jane in a surprisingly firm and thoughtful tone. 'Not too High, you know'. . . By now it was almost teatime, [but] she would go without [it] as a kind of penance for all the times she had failed as a vicar's wife."

In *Excellent Women*, Mildred Lathbury, the "just over thirty" unmarried daughter of a country clergyman, is drawn to worship at St. Mary's Church, "on the wrong side of Victoria Station," because it is relatively "High." This mild rebellion against the wishes of her dead parents involves Mildred in the lives of Father Julian Malory, his sister Winifred, and their boarder, Mrs. Allegra Gray, who has romantic designs on the unmarried rector. Mildred has more opportunities than most of the "excellent women" of the parish to involve herself with men and the possibility of marriage. But she exercises a firm sense of choice, clarified for her through simple domestic ritual: "As I moved about the kitchen getting china and cutlery, I thought, not for the first time, how pleasant it was to be living alone . . . I might be going to have a 'full life' after all."

Although Pym's early characters are not moved to profound meditation, they experience the joy of making quiet decisions about their own lives in the presence of ordinary human reality. A young anthropology student, Deidre Swan, in *Less Than Angels* (1956), draws insight for us: "Yes, I suppose it's comforting to see people going about their humdrum business . . . At home her mother would be laying the breakfast and later her aunt would creep down to see if she had done it correctly. And they would probably go on doing this all of their lives." Pym keeps faith with life itself, even its trivialities.

ONE NEVER HEARS the actual sound of terror in Pym's early novels. Her first heroine, Belinda Bede in *Some Tame Gazelle* only suggests unspoken depths by ruminating, "If only one could clear out one's mind and heart as ruthlessly as one did one's wardrobe." But two later heroines, Letty Crowe in *Quartet in Autumn* and Leonora Eyre in *The Sweet Dove Died* do encounter "nothingness" and the "horror of being." The quartet in autumn are lonely government clerks—Letty, Marcia, Norman and Edwin—who have worked together many years in an airless London office, but have shared very little of themselves. When facing retirement, Letty awakens from a dream about her youth: "All gone, that time, those people . . . [she] lay for some time meditating on the strangeness of life slipping away like this." At the office retirement party for herself and Marcia Ivory, the host does not even know what their jobs were, only that he has no reason to replace them. At this point, Letty experiences utter helplessness: "It seemed to Letty that what cannot now be justified has perhaps never existed, and it gave her the feeling that she and Marcia had been swept away as if they had never been. With this sensation of nothingness she entered the library."

The quartet hesitantly tries to redefine itself when Norman and Edwin plan a

reunion luncheon. Shortly after, when Marcia, the most eccentric of the group, dies, the three survivors follow her to the crematorium and afterward share their second meal. Returning that night to her eighty-one-year-old landlady, Letty is renewed with another cup of tea: "There was something to be said for tea and a comfortable chat about crematoria." At the end of the novel, she looks forward to a day in the country with Edwin, Norman, and Marjorie, her only sustaining friend. Planning such a day "made one realize that life still held infinite possibilities for change." To rescue herself from emotional deprivation, Letty must find significant forms and ceremonies. Pym insists that rituals preserve one from experiencing chaos, but such actions must spring from the ability of the character to assent to the realities of her own existence. Letty's picnic is thus an affirmation of life, a free act of faith.

One of Pym's most complex heroines, Leonora Eyre *(A Sweet Dove Died)* is unappealingly selfish and snobbish. A collector of Victoriana, she admits to insulating herself against disagreeable realities: "Life is only tolerable if one takes a romantic view of it . . . And yet it's wicked, really, when there's all this misery and that sort of thing, but one feels so helpless—I mean, what can one *do*?" Approaching fifty, Leonora rejects a wealthy antique dealer, Humphrey Boyce, in favor of his twenty-four-year-old bisexual nephew, James, whom she loses to a malicious homosexual. James feels that Leonora would have been able to deal with his relationship with Ned had she the ability to lose her perfect control and "been just a little angry." But unknown to James, Leonora does experience disintegration. She enters into a cycle of despair, suffering migraines and sleeping fitfully. Her first crisis occurs in a Knightsbridge tearoom where she is conscious of belonging "with the sad jewelery and the old woman and the air of things that had seen better days." Among the "cast off crusts, the ruined cream cakes and the cigarette ends," Leonora feels "debased, diminished, crushed and trodden into the ground, indeed brought to a certain point of dilapidation. I am utterly alone, she thought."

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Later, she humiliates herself further by sobbing uncontrollably in front of Meg, a younger friend who has been tormented in her love for a homosexual man. Until now, Leonora has offered her little comfort. During these two crises, Leonora creates new meaning for herself, however, by relinquishing her false pride and dignity; shallow refinements, at the beginning of the novel, now deepen into a kind of courage. But, even though Leonora grows in sympathy and sensitivity, Pym still does not claim too much for her. After all, the mode of *The Sweet Dove Died* is essentially ironic. Yet, for Pym, style is a way of coping with modern pressures, even if it cannot resolve them.

Other characters, too, relieve their isolation by discovering their own private ceremonies, for contemporary life, according to Pym's later fiction, is very unfestive. Even in a world of structured social effort, the individual is more isolated than ever. For example, the social worker assigned to Marcia Ivory *(Quartet in Autumn)* has little insight into the old woman's profound loneliness, let alone her peculiar habit of collecting, washing, and stacking discarded milk bottles. The gerontologist's mother-in-law in *A Few Green Leaves* finds more comfort participating in parish coffees than by adhering to diet charts and exercise schedules. In comparison to the present, the past is rich with natural rituals which provide assurance and connection.

If Pym's characters are in search of order and ceremony, it is ironic, indeed, that the Anglican Church, so pervasive in her novels, is never the source of inspiration for renewing one's faith. Even though Catherine Oliphant in *Less Than Angels* (1955) and Rupert Stonebird in *An Unsuitable Attachment* (1963) want to return to church, it offers little for them except the comfort of nostalgia. After her retirement, Letty Crowe tries "to discover what church-going held for people, apart from habit and convention, wondering if it would hold anything for her and if so what form this would take." Attending Stations of the Cross, she hears the litany, "'From pain to pain, from woe to woe' . . . but Letty's thoughts had been on herself and how she should arrange the rest of her life." The remaining trio in *Quartet in Autumn* finds redemption in the hope of Letty's picnic, not the celebration of liturgical ritual. Even within the church, Pym's characters are left to discover their own rites of affirmation.

In Pym's view of the modern world, only the resiliency of human nature generates the rebirth of a dead soul. But celebration will, in fact, occur, if only with a cup of tea and a "comfortable chat about crematoria." Acknowledging that "life bruises one," Wilmet Forsyth, for example, elevates her own life "in a glass of blessings," (1958) and looks forward to dinner with "Sybil and Arnold, a happy and suitable ending to a good day."

Such ordinary characters are at home in the literary imagination of Barbara Pym. To minimize this tone of her high comedy would be to deny the core of Pym's vision. But one must also admit that Pym's fiction shares in the existential temper of the modern novel. Her canon evolves toward the certainty that an individual can rescue herself from chaos, can affirm herself in a leap of faith which springs from a willingness to confront the terms of her own life. That life which Catherine Oliphant describes as "comic and sad and indefinite—dull, sometimes, but seldom really tragic or deliriously happy, except when one's very young."

Books: VIETNAM, THE BATTLE REJOINED

WITHOUT HONOR
DEFEAT IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA
Arnold R. Isaacs
Johns Hopkins, $19.95, 559 pp.

VIETNAM
A History
Stanley Karnow
Viking, $20, 750 pp.

John Spragens, Jr.

THE BATTLES of Vietnam are being fought once again. The American war in that Southeast Asian land was declared ended, on paper, more than a decade ago. It has been more than eight years since the last U.S. officials in Saigon beat an ignominious retreat from the embassy roof as revolutionary tanks rolled virtually unopposed toward the capital of the defunct southern regime.

The entire war was an ill-conceived effort to preserve a pro-Western stronghold in southern Vietnam even after Communist-led independence forces defeated French colonial armies. It began when the United States undermined the 1954 Geneva Accords which ended the French war, temporarily dividing the country pending national elections, which should have been held in 1956. It ended only after Congress balked at paying the tab for the Saigon government — a regime which continued to insist it was the sole government of a separate southern state even after the 1973 Paris agreement was signed. In this, Saigon fundamentally contradicted the provisions of that peace agreement, which recognized the southern revolutionaries and confirmed that the division of Vietnam into North and South was only temporary.

Today's battlefield is no longer the jungles and paddy fields of Vietnam. It is the pages of books and the screens of our televisions. The battle today is for the hearts and minds of the American public. Many of the authors of the new crop of Vietnam books, like at least some of the producers of the current public television series on the war, have a deep, passionate interest in the Vietnam war itself. Some even have an interest in the way that war affected the lands and peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. But the new

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debate looks forward more than back — to Lebanon and Grenada and El Salvador; to whether and how the United States should use its power abroad.

Arnold Isaacs lays his bias on the line in his preface. The U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, he writes, "represented a broken promise to millions of Vietnamese — not just a few corrupt generals — who depended on American protection against a ruthless and determined enemy." But his impassioned narrative does not focus narrowly on proving this point. He clearly demonstrates the corruption and military ineptness of the leaders in Saigon — qualities which alienated them from the population of the South and left them unprepared to fight without a shield of American soldiers and bombers.

Isaacs's anguished chapter on the collapse of the city of Da Nang, where the first American Marines had landed in 1965, is reason enough to read his fast-paced report. "Da Nang was not captured," he writes, "it disintegrated in its own terror. Of the 50,000 South Vietnamese soldiers stationed in and around the city, hardly any raised a rifle in its defense." About the same time, farther south in Saigon, an American diplomat was urging members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam "to show confidence in the country's future by expanding their own enterprises and encouraging their friends and associates to invest there."

Without Honor makes especially good use of studies prepared by the U.S. Defense Attaché Office in Saigon between 1973 and 1975. Isaacs does not make as determined an effort to explore sources from the revolutionary side. And, like most Western reporters, his wartime coverage seems to have been entirely from one side of the lines. He does range beyond Vietnam itself to deal with Cambodia and often-neglected Laos, and he demonstrates a real concern for the fate of ordinary people in the three countries of Indochina. At times, though, the limited range of his sources leads his compassion astray. He has the impression, for example, that "the Hmong of Laos had virtually been destroyed as a people" because of their involvement with the CIA's "Secret Army" in that country. In fact, a substantial number of Hmong fought with the revolutionary Pathet Lao, and others were able to avoid the war. The Hmong people and culture are alive in postwar Laos.

In his book, Isaacs has concentrated on the period between the Paris Agreement and the end of the war some two years later. Stanley Karnow reaches for more, attempting to review Vietnamese history from the coming of the French until the present, with a brief sideways glance at Cambodia. (His book was written as a companion to the public television series, for which he was the chief correspondent.)

Karnow's style is so tedious that it is tempting to recommend a short list of more easily digested books instead. Don Oberdorfer's *Tet* is better on the 1968 National Liberation Front offensive. Robert Pisor covers the siege of Khe Sanh better in *The End of the Line*. *Fields of Fire* by James Webb gives a more engaging account of the GI experience. And Tiziano Terzano deals with the end of the war better in *Giai Phong*. Still, *Vietnam: A History* has a particularly good account of the overthrow of Saigon's President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, one of the events Karnow covered in his long service as a war correspondent. More than that, he at least attempts to sketch the connecting tissue of events between the high points in the fighting. That is a task no one else has tackled with particular success since the end of the war, from whatever political perspective.

Karnow does draw on an interesting series of interviews with Vietnamese revolutionaries—interviews compiled during an extended trip to Vietnam in 1981 with a crew working on the television series. Despite the length of that visit, however, he offers a jumbled sketch of present-day Vietnam. And despite his efforts to present a balanced account, his biases show in comments like this, from the end of the last chapter. "The collision of East and West — as Europeans colonized parts of Asia . . . also stirred Vietnam — and sowed the seeds of a struggle that was to *culminate* — in the inscription of nearly fifty-eight thousand American names on a granite memorial in Washington" [emphasis added].

So long as American casualties — whether in Saigon or Beirut or San Salvador — remain the highest consideration, we will have learned too little from Vietnam. We must meet the countries of the third world on their own terms, not use them as pawns in global power games. If we cannot do that, then Vietnam will not be the last encounter to leave us with the painful scars of defeat in a war we should never have fought.

The great Vatican caper

PONTIFF

Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts
Doubleday, $17.95, 459 pp.

Desmond O'Grady

FICTION is a fabrication which at its best can convey truth. At its worst new journalism, which uses fictional techniques in reporting actual persons and events, tells lies in convincing detail. The description of the pastel wallcovering and the mahogany chest of drawers in a room disposes the reader to believe that the account of what allegedly happened there is accurate. Some knowledge of the people and events involved is needed to break the spell of "Once upon a time in a room with pastel wallcovering . . ."

My knowledge of the Vatican broke *Pontiff's* spell. The fluffs in its treatment of the Vatican, undermined its claim that the KGB used Ali Agca who attempted to assassinate John Paul II. If it makes myriad mistakes about the Vatican, does it have a grasp of the KGB? Maybe *Pontiff* has the shade of the wallcovering in the pope's study right, but it does not understand more important matters such as what a pope is and has only a foggy idea of his situation.

The co-authors do not understand the

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significance of the Second Vatican Council, when the church modified its self-awareness. Of course they refer to the Council, but more as a series of separate issues than as the context for the pontificates of Paul VI, John Paul I, and John Paul II, which are their subject. Vagueness about context means that they often miss out on the definition, or the nuances, of issues, preferring buzz words such as "open" or "meaningful."

Pontiff does not even handle the prolonged Jesuit-Vatican controversy adequately. Although it is one of the key issues of the book, only the censorious Vatican version (Jesuits are running wild) is given. The Jesuit viewpoint (the Order is basically sound despite some publicity-grabbing mavericks) is not given, nor is an overview which would show why the Vatican counts particularly on the church's largest and most prestigious order and why the Jesuits are particularly tested by the abrupt shift from a Counter-Reformation mentality. St. Benedict will get a chuckle: Thomas and Morgan-Witts refer to the Jesuits as monks. Despite their vaunted twenty-two months of research, two hundred thousand miles of travel, six million words transcribed in interviews, a further eight million words of documentation and "much else," the authors apparently did not walk the three hundred yards from St. Peter's to the Jesuit headquarters for the necessary information.

Anyone will make mistakes in a book on three popes but some of those in *Pontiff* indicate the authors started knowing nothing and hard work could not quite overcome this. Several reviewers have noted the clanger in which they describe Hans Küng being called to the third floor of the Congregation for Doctrine and condemned. It is widely known that Küng has always refused to come to Rome for a trial and was condemned without appearing.

Among other howlers: "Gianpaolo is suggesting his will be a pontificate in the Constantine tradition, with less politicking and more praying." But it is usually considered that the Emperor Constantine's conversion meant quite the opposite: more politicking and less praying.

> *Magee, studying all the reactions to Pope John Paul's American trip, becomes convinced that what has happened is not of the pope's own making, but that of certain radical elements within the American Church. . . . It is they, not the pope, who have unleashed forces which are tearing and pulling at what has been unquestioned for centuries.*
>
> — Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts
> *Pontiff*

Cardinal Pericle Felici is described as an advocate for more power for the conservative Opus Dei movement. This is plausible since Felici was a conservative. It is also mistaken. Felici, wary of power groups within the church, opposed Opus Dei.

The book confirms stereotypes, and stereotype-confirming is what *Pontiff* is largely about. It treats Cardinal Agostino Casaroli as a moderator-compromiser in every situation. From *Pontiff* you would never guess that Casaroli had any principles, vision, or sense of humor. Nor the importance of his office, the secretary of state. The authors often refer to him as "the secretary" as if he could be confused with the pope's personal secretaries. The authors are almost as vague about the Vatican diplomatic service as they are about theology and its role. (They describe the theology of certain cardinals as "impeccable" as if it were an accent.) They claim John Paul I had exciting innovations in mind: ". . . eventually there might even be non-Italian nuncios." In fact, before John Paul I there had been non-Italian nuncios for years — such as the Australian James Knox in India.

A footnote suggests Casaroli would not collaborate with the authors. This may explain his undeservedly minor role in the book and provide a clue to the prominence given to sources such as the Irish Dominican Father Lambert Greenan and to the archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz Koenig.

Greenan is described as "witty," and "one of the sharpest and finest minds working in the service of the Holy See." We are provided a sample of Greenan's "wit" which makes him sound like the essence of Irish clerical insensitivity: Seated at a dinner party beside the small, swarthy Sicilian nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Gaetano Alibrandi, Greenan smiled at him and said "I had no idea we had Arabs in the Church's diplomatic service. Your name. Ali Brandi. That's Arabic for sure in my book." The two men didn't exchange another word during dinner and Greenan "tabbed Alibrandi as 'a fella who couldn't see a joke'."

Koenig fares even worse. He has a reputation for intelligence but the authors make one suspect he is a pompous self-promoter who also sees Bolshies behind every bush. The authors attribute to him what I believe to be an unwarranted importance in Vatican diplomacy. "It was his nod," they write, "which encouraged the Vatican to establish diplomatic relations with Jugoslavia." Koenig might have been consulted but the Vatican has a professional diplomatic corps and diplomatic relations were part of the Paul VI-Casaroli *Ostpolitik* which had already produced an agreement with Hungary.

If the remainder of the presentation of Koenig is accurate, the less attention Vatican diplomats pay to him the better. On the death of John Paul I, the then Secretary of State Cardinal Jean Villot decided there should be a cover-up of the fact that the pope was found in bed by the nun who took him his morning coffee. The official version was that his Irish secretary, Father John Magee, found him but someone rang the true version to a right-wing Roman publication and all hell broke loose. Vatican officials frequently try to settle grudges by leaks to the press but here, according to the authors, Koenig saw the long hand of the KGB: "Koenig is even sure he knows which section of the KGB spawned it: it bears the malevolent mark of Department D—for *dezinformatsiya* – of the First Chief Directorate. Only Department D can move so swiftly, be so well organized, calling upon its vast experience in the area of grand deceptions designed to mislead, confuse, or influence world opinion against the Church . . . What has

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occurred reeks of the opportunism which has in the past seen other Department D provocations grow to monstrous proportions." In a slide typical of the book, this hypothesis is soon asserted as a fact which underpins the authors' main thrust: that the KGB was behind the assassination attempt on John Paul II.

Pontiff begins in 1978 with Ali Agca planning to kill Paul VI, then switches back and forth between the Vatican and the Turk headed for St. Peter's square while popes succeed one another. The device is effective and the narrative technique is well handled despite the subjournalistic prose capable of "wide breadth"; confusion between "obtuse" and "obscure," and "ingenious" and "ingenuous"; and sentences such as this (after the Vatican announced that the sick Paul VI's Sunday blessing has been canceled) "This brief statement heightened the perception of observers both in and outside the Vatican." Perhaps the excuse for this prose is that the authors describe themselves as "social historians."

The ungainly prose does not prevent the book having its moments, e.g., the description of the conclaves which elected the two John Pauls and the whole detailed Ali Agca sequence including a spell in a Libyan terrorist training camp.

Pontiff's conclave and Ali Agca stories are plausible but then so are other sections which I know are mistaken. Thomas and Morgan-Witts also assert John Paul II wrote to Leonid Brezhnev warning he would return home to fight if Poland were invaded. They interpret Vatican denial of this story as further proof of its veracity.

Pontiff is an inextricable farrago of fact and fancy, a masterpiece of disinformation. Could this be Department D at work after all? Well, listen to the ever-so-canny Casaroli in *Pontiff*: "There was a very real possibility that the KGB was content to let the world know it was implicated — that it deliberately wanted the attack on the pope to be seen as a stark message that the Soviet Union has the capability to eliminate opposition anywhere." I'm surprised Cardinal Koenig did not spot that one.

Aspirants & philistines

ON BECOMING A NOVELIST
John Gardner
Harper & Row, $13.95, 150 pp.

PANIC AMONG THE PHILISTINES
Bryan F. Griffin
Regnery Gateway, $12.95, 259 pp.

William O'Rourke

"PEOPLE who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." But who lives in a glass house? Politicians, celebrities? Well, yes and no. But the indisputable tenants of the world's glassiest houses, those who live the most revealed lives, are writers. And, these days, the shattering of glass can be heard everywhere. There has been no shortage lately of articles by novelists and poets with a variety of grievances. Given the present social and political climate there is a lot to complain about — I have a few complaints myself. But surprisingly, most of the trouble, according to most of the essays that I have seen, is not the fickle public, the publishers, or the late twentieth century, but other writers!

Two long pieces of this sort by "someone named" Bryan F. Griffin (that is how Mr. Griffin introduces people of insufficient renown) ran in *Harper's* some time ago, and have now been expanded and issued as a book. He throws quite a few stones, though what usually upsets him is that the writers most vulgarly known are the most vulgar, a tautology he seems not to notice. John Gardner, the author of fourteen books, many of them novels, who died recently, takes a different tack in the posthumous *On Becoming a Novelist*, but he, too, heaves a handful of stones, though his principal aim is that of a buoyant real estate agent, showing off a few glass houses to eager buyers.

One complaint heard often today (and made a number of times by Griffin) is that there are already too many writers. But, of course, there wouldn't seem to be too many writers if there were more readers to go round. There are certainly more "creative" writers of ability today than there were fifty years ago, just as there are more talented golfers, tennis players, basketball players, too; more engineers, lawyers, etc. But though the practitioners of literature are increasing, the audience for their work seems to be an endangered species. So, like white mice in an overpopulated cage, writers have begun to cannibalize each other; it is a disheartening display of literary anthropophagism. If you have readers you feel you have enough space around you; if you are denied readers, or access to them, the claustrophobia becomes lethal.

John Gardner's book is aimed at aspirants, those foolish enough to want to join the fray. It is a how-to book, though Gardner, along the way, gives his views on how to separate the gems from the paste, the true artist from the phonies. The material in the first half of the book is the sort of thing you would hear if you attended a solid creative writing class, say, one taught by the likes of a John Gardner. These pages reveal an obviously warm and generous spirit.

It is instructive, though, to contrast his ideas with those found in Annie Dillard's *Living by Fiction*, published last year, which has been recently reissued in paperback [*Harper & Row*, $4.95, 192 pp.]. There Dillard writes disapprovingly, "People still magically regard novelists as helpless, fascinating neurotics who compose in deliriums or trances . . . young writers may be misled into thinking that novelists are rich or even that they are active. But this is silly."

Silly or not, that is, more or less, how Gardner describes novelists. It is, he tells the novice, beneficial to have something wrong with you: "A psychological wound is helpful . . . some fatal childhood accident for which one feels responsible . . . embarrassment about one's own physical appearance: all these are promising signs." He is also very much of the "trance" school of fiction composition, even to go as far as suggesting methods of self-hypnosis. Gardner was also well-off and died actively in a motorcycle accident.

Annie Dillard, at least in her published

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work, has been thus far *living by nonfiction*; she may be a novelist-to-be. I do not know. But anyone who has written a novel will not entirely laugh off some aspects of Gardner's description — even if it is ridiculous as instruction.

One aspect of Gardner's book, that needs noting: it is a success story. You do not want to learn how to get rich from someone who is poor. But Gardner's pages on how-to-get-published can be had from anyone; it's the same advice someone who has never been published but who has tried will give you. What Gardner would need to reveal to explain his own success — well deserved though it was — is how to be at the right place at the right moment, and in front of the right person, which, of course, is impossible to learn.

A seasoned author, therefore, will look in vain for some irony through the book, especially in the second half, which is, in many ways, embarrassing. There most of the straight advice is doled out: "Neatness counts," and so forth. Where is his tongue in cheek? one asks, when Gardner does a shill's soft shoe for Bread Loaf-like writers conferences, complete with an adman's puffery: intense "love affairs" shaking the bushes! Raymond Carver's memoir, of Gardner as professor and Carver as student, which serves as a foreword to the book, is more to the point of how to become a novelist.

The kindest and most sympathetic reading of Griffin's *Panic Among the Philistines* (his first book) will turn up at least one point: there were more good books written in the last twenty-five centuries than in the last twenty-five years. I don't think the author most spat upon in his long diatribe would disagree with that notion entirely. But, on most other things, people will disagree. I looked forward to reading this material; I enjoy Davids attacking Goliaths. The hugely successful should be made to endure a few knocks on their well padded reputations. Who has a heart so kind that he wouldn't enjoy Mr. Griffin's wielding his chain saw on the grotesquely overpraised? But, alas, he has set back the whole noble cause of the kamikaze attack. I fear his book will have the same effect on the literary celebrated he takes potshots at as did mad Hinckley's attack on Reagan — it will bring them only sympathy.

Though one may tolerate Jerzy Kosinsky's getting kicked around yet again, this time for his pornography collection; and one may even think Griffin right, but for the wrong reasons, about D.M. Thomas's novel *The White Hotel*, it is discomforting to realize that even when one (here and there) agrees with him, his prose remains insufferable, and so too the attitudes that infest it. Griffin has the sort of style That Gives One A Headache (to adopt his manner of enlivening every third sentence with the stuttering capital). His writing has, like a cheap appliance, three settings, low, medium, and high. Low is a sort of anti-fan magazine diction: no one "said" anything. Everyone he quotes either "giggles," or "sighs," or "sobs"; ". . . giggled David Ansen of *Newsweek*," "sighed young David," "sobbed Mr. Ansen" — and that's just one paragraph. The medium speed is the tone of the uppercrust snob, a preppy dismissiveness; everyone who is not a household word is introduced by a demeaning label: "someone named Earl Ubell." If it happens to be a person of startling output, his name is prefaced with the most everyday of his accomplishments: "a fifty-year-old professor of creative writing named John Barth."

Griffin has a good deal of scorn for professors — he only uses the label as an insult — but his book would have had some mischievous value for future literary historians if it had been outfitted with some scholarly apparatus, citation of sources, and an index.

Lord knows there is a lot wrong with the literary community these days, but Mr. Griffin is not the sort of charismatic fellow you'd pick to head your crusade, despite his rhetorical similarity to Rev. Jerry Falwell. What fills out the bulk of *Panic Among the Philistines* is what Mr. Griffin calls, typically capitalized, The Important Subject: sex, and its depiction in various forms in print. Sex exercises him mightily. Griffin's arguments bring to mind the picture of the backwoods judge who views all the pornographic films three times before issuing an injunction against them. But, even after dwelling too long on the material that disgusts him, what he cries out for is not its banishment, but that an offender like Christopher Isherwood be "reprimanded" for "reminiscing in public" about the dear dead days when he used to cavort with German prostitutes . . ." It's the *in public* that really seems to bother Mr. Griffin; what he desires is a return to gentility, to the world before 1917 (his date), to a world whose hypocritical but dignified surface is restored.

But when I hear it complained that sex and violence have increased in our visible culture, I wonder why it is not more generally observed that violence has carried the day. John Irving and his *Garp* come in for a lot of Mr. Griffin's raspberries, but if Mr. Griffin has actually read Irving's book he must know that violence overwhelms the sex in it — as is the usual case these days. A little sex, a lot of violence. The reasons for this would make an interesting subject to pursue, but Mr. Griffin is not overly distressed about violence. Indeed, he barely stops short of calling out for lynch-mob justice against the lewd scribblers he sees hogging the arena of popular culture. That brings us to his third and last voice, the high, the hortatory: "In practical terms, it is the battle between those who would use the tools of civilization — education and knowledge and liberty and peace — to savage those values . . . It is the everlasting battle in which there are no truces, the battle between the smile and the leer, between innocence and sophistication, beauty and lust, truth and cynicism, love

REVIEWERS

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and pornography . . ." And on and on.

Again, even with a sympathetic ear for some of his complaints, one still must say that Mr. Griffin seems woefully ignorant of recent literary history. He does not seem to have grasped that the literature of earlier centuries appears purer than ours because time has already blown the chaff from the wheat (and along with it, alas, some of the best wheat). He does think his side, the "intellectually militant people," have been winning the battle. And so Mr. Griffin stands like a small boy in a duststorm, not knowing why his eyes smart, but standing there stubbornly, rubbing them all the same.

In brief

THE CALL TO CONVERSION *by Jim Wallis. Harper & Row, $9.95 190 pp.*

In the present context of increasing Christian peace witness and a flowering of grass roots Christian communities, *The Call to Conversion* is a sensitive and helpful book.

Jim Wallis and the Sojourners Community have been involved in probing the implications of Christian conversion for the last fifteen years and they are well qualified to address the various aspects of this subject. They have learned that authentic conversion "has everything to do with community" and Wallis's book presents many valuable insights about the economic and political consequence of a Christian commitment to live in community.

The chapter on Christian witness against the nuclear arms race is perhaps the finest in the book. Wallis does an excellent job of describing the challenges that the arms race and the surrounding arms culture pose for Christian faith. He writes with passion and conviction of the need for the Christian churches to see the Bomb as a countersign to the Cross and to resist all of the Bomb's many manifestations.

Throughout the book, Wallis intersperses descriptions of his own efforts to follow his evangelical heritage into the communitarian and social dimensions of conversion. In a chapter on cultural seduction, he inveighs against the pattern he describes as "evangelical nationalism." He encourages culture-bound Christians of all denominations to recognize the betrayal that political and economic conformity ultimately involves.

One minor weakness of the book is its slightly repetitive character. The seven chapters effectively delineate seven important dimensions of conversion. However, biblical material which provided a foundation for the earlier analysis is sometimes repeated in the later chapters.

RICHARD J. CASSIDY

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Correspondence

(Continued from page 2)

"Justice in Irish Society" did not elicit such passionate controversy. If the referendum was "a last final salute to traditional Catholicism" then it is a Catholicism of "liberal" imaginings irredeemably tied to a nineteenth century model.

As to Mr. Kirby's amazement at discovering people "walking out of church" in protest against unpalatable pulpit invective, he is a trifle naive to construe this as a "new" phenomenon: it has a long history in Ireland! In some ways I am rather glad that we as a people can engage in passionate controversy on serious matters and still contain our passion within the constraints of the democratic process.

(REV.) MARTIN RAFFERTY, C.M

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

Irish bamboozlement

Quebec, Canada

To the Editors: In his article "A Pyrrhic Victory" [Oct. 7] Peadar Kirby treats you and your readers to a pretty fair sample of the kind of journalistic shell game used by the anti-abortion amendment campaign writers to confuse and hoodwink the Irish electorate in the recent constitutional amendment campaign. That the technique was successful up to a point is evident from the fact that even such a clear-thinking person as Malcolm Muggeridge was bamboozled — together with one-third of my compatriots.

The anti-amendment faction, which included practically all of the news and information media, fought an all-out battle in which no holds were barred. Leading pro-life speakers were denied permission to appear on TV — American pro-lifers thus silenced included Dr. Bernard Nathanson, Mrs. Barbara Willkie, Mrs. Nancy Jo Mann, and Congressmen Henry Hyde and Chris Smith. The radio network was not much less restrictive than the TV network and was equally pro-abortion, perhaps even more so.

The disinformation campaign was at first directed toward trying to convince the public that an amendment was not necessary, or at least not necessary now. The media gurus assured the public that the 1861 law already prohibited abortion and the courts could be trusted to uphold the law. They did not mention that the

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1861 law was similar to the laws that had failed to protect the unborn in Britain, the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. They said that in the existing economic climate it would be much more urgent to "do something about the economy rather than waste time on abortion." Actually, if the government had gone ahead and introduced the amendment as it had promised, very little time would have been wasted. All the waste of time was occasioned by the campaign to prevent the amendment from being introduced in the form which had been promised during the election campaign and to prevent it from being passed after it was introduced.

The "anti" faction tried from the beginning to convince the electorate that the pro-life campaign was a sectarian Catholic attempt to enforce Catholic morality on the population. The truth is that the earliest pro-life activists in Ireland were Protestants. The first major pro-life rally in the country was organized by a young Anglican student, Paul Daly, aided by fellow students from Trinity College which is not known as a bastion of Catholicism. I participated in that rally, in 1979, and I can tell you that there was a considerable amount of bitterness felt among the demonstrators about the number of Catholic priests and nuns who stood on the sidelines watching. Protestants have at all times been among the leaders of the movement in numbers far exceeding their proportion of the population. . . .

An article in the *Sunday Press*, September 11, 1983, said: "The amount of anti-Catholicism on the anti-amendment side was depressing. Fortunately — but also predictably, this being Ireland — it was not matched by any equivalent anti-Protestantism. Anyone can go through the newspaper and magazine files and the taped programmes, count the number of anti-Catholic statements and innuendos, and search for anti-Protestant counterparts. . . . The anti-Catholicism was depressing because of the long, sad history of that disease in Ireland; because bigotry is always depressing; and because of the naive old-fashioned hopes which often go with such zeal in Ireland today."

PEADAR HOPKINS, C.D.

The bishops' view

Dublin

To the Editors: Peadar Kirby's article on the constitutional amendment in the Irish Republic providing explicit recognition of the right to the life of the unborn ("A Pyrrhic Victory," Oct. 7) represented a particular view. It was nowhere stated, but your readers should know, that Mr. Kirby was not an impartial observer. He played an active part in the campaign against the amendment.

I fully recognize that any report on this very complex issue can, inevitably, express only part of the total picture. But his article lays very strong emphasis on the religio-moral dimension of the debate. I am at a loss to understand, therefore, why no reference whatever was made to the formal statement of the Irish Bishops' Conference issued two weeks before polling day. All the more so, since important parts of that very significant statement were warmly welcomed by the anti-amendment umbrella group.

Lest Peadar Kirby's article has left your readers believing the leaders of the Irish Catholic church to be a bunch of narrow-minded, tyrannical rednecks, may I quote the core of the bishops' statement:

"We recognize the right of each person to vote according to conscience. Each voter has the responsibility of weighing the moral consequences of his or her vote and of making a conscientious decision in the privacy of the polling booth. . .

"It must not be suggested or implied that all of those who oppose the amendment are in favor of abortion. But it must be said that there are active pro-abortion groups among them. Consequently, defeat of the amendment could well be represented as a victory for the abortion cause.

"We have already said (November 1982) that no constitutional amendment of itself can be a full response to the problem of abortion. While making explicit provision in the constitution for the basic right to life of the unborn, we must also show understanding, compassion, and Christian love towards mothers who find their pregnancy distressing and who might be tempted to see abortion as a solution to their problem. All law, however necessary and worthy in itself, must be supplemented by love.

"Furthermore, we have an obligation as a society to remedy and remove those circumstances which move people to have recourse to abortion. . .

"However, it is the function of the law to protect, as far as possible, basic human rights. Of these the most fundamental is the right to life. We are aware that some have reservations about the effect of the amendment on existing medical practice. Nevertheless, it is our considered opinion that the amendment will safeguard the right to life both of the mother and the unborn child. Concern for the mother's life must always go hand in hand with concern for her unborn child. Anyone who claims to be pro-life must be emphatically pro-mother as well.

"While some conscientiously hold a different opinion, we are convinced that a clear majority in favor of the amendment will greatly contribute to the continued protection of unborn human life in the laws of our country. This could have a significant impact in a world where abortion is often taken for granted. A decisive 'Yes' to the amendment will, we believe, in the words of Pope John Paul II in Limerick, constitute a 'witness before Europe and before the whole world to the dignity and sacredness of all human life, from conception until death'."

JIM CANTWELL
Director, Catholic Press
and Information Office

The author replies:

Dublin

The points made by your correspondents indicate the depth of feeling aroused in Ireland by the abortion referendum. However both Father Rafferty and Mr. Hopkins simply repeat arguments made by the pro-amendment lobby during the campaign which minimize the sectarian nature of the divide which emerged over the issue and overlook the serious difficulties raised by both leading doctors and lawyers about the *possible* effects of the wording.

I welcome Jim Cantwell's contribu-

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tion of lengthy quotes from the statement of the Irish Catholic bishops on the issue. Unfortunately the length of my article did not allow me to differentiate between what I agree was a measured and balanced statement by the bishops' conference and the far less balanced pastoral letters issued by numerous individual bishops, including Archbishop Ryan of Dublin, urging a "Yes" vote in *much* stronger terms. These latter, together with the crusading use made of the pulpit by many priests in favor of the amendment, also constitute an essential aspect of the Catholic church's stand on the issue.

While I agree with Jim Cantwell that I was not an impartial observer of the campaign since, from the moment the proposal was first raised, I had strong personal doubts about the wisdom of it, he is completely incorrect to state that I "played an active part in the campaign against the amendment." I was never a member of any grouping on one side or the other and not once stated publicly an opinion for or against it. Neither did I take any part in campaigning. What I did do was to edit a booklet put out by the Anti-Amendment Campaign at the request of a friend of mine who knew I had sub-editing skills. While I probably would not have done that if I did not have a certain sympathy with that side of the argument, I did it before the campaign itself got underway (even before any wording for the proposed amendment was published) and had no other involvement with the Anti-Amendment Campaign.

I leave it to your readers to decide if they consider the leaders of the Irish church to be "a bunch of narrow-minded, tyrannical rednecks," as Jim Cantwell fears. I certainly do not so consider them and I find it hard to see how my article gives this impression.

As to the sectarian argument, the fact that some Protestants supported the measure does not change the fact that *all* the major Protestant churches, for the first time since the foundation of the southern state, uniformly opposed a major political proposal. Leading Church of Ireland (Anglican), Presbyterian and Methodist spokesmen again and again referred to the sectarian nature of it; the simple denial that such was the case by Catholic leaders did nothing to change these widespread Protestant perceptions of it.

To counter your correspondents' argument that the amendment was necessary, there is much evidence to suggest that by raising the matter at all the strong consensus which existed in Irish society against abortion has been eroded. Neither do your correspondents seem to put much trust in a legislature and judiciary which, far from rushing to liberalize Ireland's conservative laws on sexual morality, have shown themselves if anything lingering behind public opinion on these matters.

While I agree that many prominent journalists allowed their own opposition to the amendment to color their reporting, I know of no evidence to suggest that the Irish media was pro-abortion or was responsible for confusing Mr. Muggeridge on the issue, as Mr. Hopkins says.

If Father Rafferty is suggesting in his second last paragraph that many Irish commentators today have a rather nineteenth-century view of simply wanting to restrict the church's influence in the public domain as much as possible, then I wholeheartedly agree. Far from arguing for such a view I have many times urged church leaders to mobilize Catholics to make a more christianizing impact on our society. But if the Irish bishops continue to dig in their heels on issues such as church control of education and liberalization of laws on sexual morality, then unfortunately they cast themselves in the role of nineteenth-century clericalists inviting liberal opposition. If they ever begin to crusade as strongly for social justice as they did on the amendment they will evoke a different response.

Meanwhile Father Rafferty is flying in the face of the findings of all recent surveys of belief and practice if he thinks that the Catholic church is not in a major state of crisis in Ireland today. From the clerical grapevine I hear that some of our bishops are privately acknowledging that the whole episode of the amendment served to deepen the alienation from the church being felt by many ordinary Catholics.

PEADAR KIRBY

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Dear Reader,

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That has been the story ever since. Raising funds to keep *Commonweal* going has never been easy. In the early days, the magazine was criticized for being "highbrow." Later it was condemned for being "liberal." But always it found friends who were undeterred by these labels and understood the need for an independent, inquiring, thoughtful journal, "expressive of the Catholic note."

The role of such generous friends remains as essential as ever. Today the key to financial security for intellectual journals seems to be ideological militancy in what some combatants call the "war of ideas." Magazines like this one, which prefer to believe that the mind should operate quite differently than a howitzer, have had to find supporters as concerned about continuing discussions as winning debates. Fortunately, *Commonweal* has found such supporters in its Commonweal Associates.

Without them, *Commonweal* would not have entered its sixtieth year. Without them, it will not enter its sixty-first year. To all the Commonweal Associates, for their continuing generosity, we express our deepest gratitude — and our hope that even more readers will join their ranks.

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